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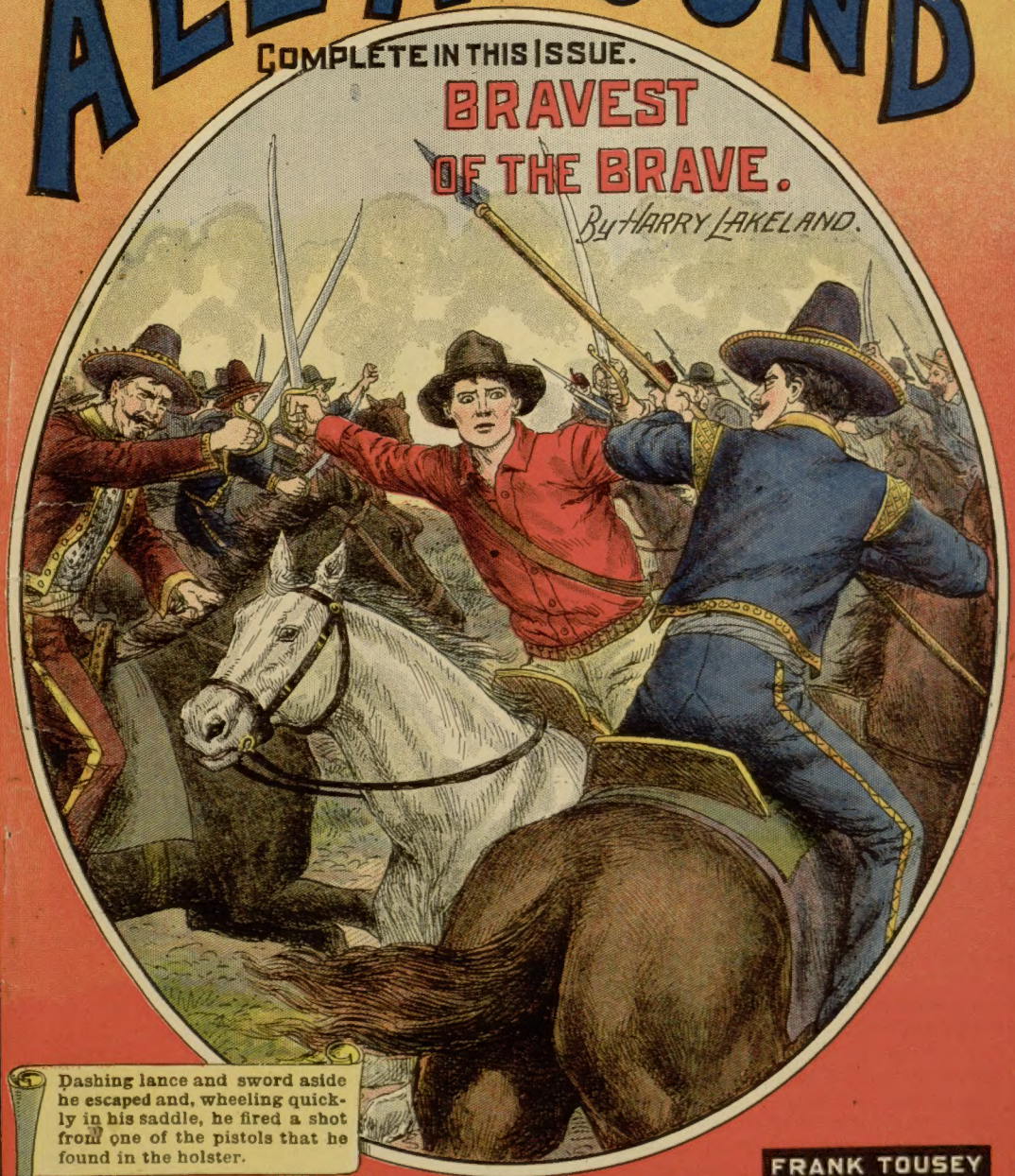
ALL AROUND

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE.

By HARRY LAKELAND.



Dashing lance and sword aside he escaped and, wheeling quickly in his saddle, he fired a shot from one of the pistols that he found in the holster.

WEEKLY.

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Bravest of the Brave

A STORY OF THE MEXICAN WAR

By HARRY LAKELAND

CHAPTER I.

A CALL TO ARMS.

The flower and chivalry of Louisiana had gathered, and bright lights shone over fair women and brave men.

It was the 30th of March.

In one of the most beautiful halls in New Orleans there was assembled the very cream of her aristocratic society.

No more beautiful women ever smiled, and no braver men ever breathed than were there drawn together to weave up mazes of giddy dance, and chase the glowing hours with flying feet.

While this revelry was at its height there came news of trouble on the Mexican border, the march of General Taylor upon the skirts of the enemy, and the call for volunteers.

A messenger from the governor came hastily into the ball-room. He was in search of one of his excellency's aides, who was taking part in the festivities.

Expectation had been on tip-toe for several days, and when he appeared he was quickly surrounded by a dozen brave fellows who eagerly asked for the news.

Samuel Walker, a West Point graduate, was among the number. He was known to be a brave, gallant young fellow, but being poor and not belonging strictly to the New Orleans aristocracy, he was not what might have been called a pampered son of society.

He had only been back from West Point about two months, and as yet had not been assigned to any regiment, although he left the military school with the rank of lieutenant.

There were several other graduates from West Point there, some of them with assignments and some without. They knew when the governor's messenger appeared on the floor of the ball-room that something unusual had happened, and so did nearly every one present, for hardly had he taken a dozen steps towards the spot where Captain Davis (afterward the President of the Southern Confederacy) stood, than they forsook the dance and crowded anxiously around him.

"What is it, Tom?" asked one of them.

"We have lively news from the Rio del Norte," said the messenger.

"What?" asked a dozen voices.

"General Tayler with his little army has moved upon disputed soil, and is even now threatened by the whole Greaser army."

A thrill, almost like a convulsion, swept the listening throng.

"The general has sent to several States for volunteers, Louisiana among the rest, and you officers and West Pointers are requested to report to him at once."

A wild cheer rang through the hall, and the dancing festivities were at an end. A quick rush was made for the cloak-room by the West Pointers, while those interested in the quarrel between the United States and Mexico followed and made arrangements for sudden departure.

Ladies clung to their partners, and the floor manager endeavored to restore order. The band that had ceased playing when the messenger first appeared in the hall, now struck up a favorite waltz in the hope of quieting the excitement.

A few caught their partners and whirled away, but the

music only inspired the resolute ones to higher resolves, and made them hasten their departure.

Then there were leave-takings, sudden and most unexpected, and fair cheeks were pale that but a few moments before were blushing at the praise of their own loveliness.

Young Sam Walker was the first to start, and while waiting in the cloak-room for his hat and coat, he could but see the painful partings between lovers which were taking place all around him.

"I have no one but my old landlady to take leave of," said he.

Just then an imperious beauty swept past him. She was the belle of New Orleans, and soon after his return from West Point he had been foolish and presumptuous enough to plead for her hand in marriage.

She at first professed to be insulted, and assuming the act of pitiful forgiveness, she laughed at his suit, and coldly reminded him of the difference in their stations so far as wealth was concerned, and turned away with an expressed hope that he might find his equal, and be so contented with it that he would never aspire to hands above his sphere.

It was a cruel blow, given by a heartless coquette, who had half of the city at her feet, and young Walker, in love for the first time in his life, took it painfully to heart.

They had not met to speak since then. She had boasted that the handsomest and poorest cavalier had been on his knees to her, and that she had taught him a useful lesson in ambition.

She passed near where he was standing.

A cold, half bow escaped him, for he could but remember how beautiful she was.

"Are you going, lieutenant?" she asked, in a sweet, interested tone of voice.

Lieutenant she had never deigned to call him before.

"I am, Miss Villers," said he, bowing.

"May fortune attend you, lieutenant."

"Thanks," said he, half-indifferently.

"And perhaps, when you return, you may be eligible for the social dignity you seek."

"I am going, Miss Adelaide Villers, but my ambition will never lead me to seek a bubble again."

"A bubble!" said she, with some spirit.

She turned as if to reproach him, but only in time to see him making his way hurriedly through the throng towards the door.

"He has gone!" said she, and after standing a moment in her statuesque attitude, an acquaintance approached her, rallied her on her sentimentality regarding the departure of those who sought war, and, finally offering her his arm, led her back into the ball-room, where both band and managers were trying so hard to stem the tide and continue the festivities.

But the spirit of the ball had departed, and after one or two attempts at reviving it, the management was obliged to acknowledge that there was no further hope of success in continuing it, and one by one those left behind who believed they could revivify it, were gliding from the hall, and in a short time all was silent and dark, where only a little while before had reigned mirth, beauty, chivalry and desire.

And so the first picture in this terrible drama dissolves.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAPTURE OF WAR.

Those yet surviving who anticipated in that armed romance, still remember the wild, yes, almost insane enthusiasm that took possession of everybody in the United States, when the news of the doings on the Rio Grande was spread abroad.

Bells were rung, cannons fired, wild assemblages were addressed by patriotic speakers, and recruiting offices were opened to receive the youth of all grades who wished to volunteer to uphold the honor and dignity of the stars and stripes.

All West Pointers were ordered to report at once to General Taylor, while the raising and equipping of troops was taken in hand by State officers.

The steamer Golden was ready to sail the day following the events already narrated. She was a United States transport, and was taking out war material for the American army.

Young Walker was poor, and his personal effects were soon packed, and as he had only a few friends to take a farewell of, he was quickly ready and on board the transport, where he was soon joined by several other West Pointers.

The Golden sailed with the early turn of the tide. A crowd of spectators cheered the departure of the young officers, who were so quick to respond to the call of their country.

The distance between New Orleans and the mouth of the Rio Grande is something over six hundred miles, but the Golden was a good sailer, and in less than three days reached Point Isabel.

Walker kept more by himself, although those who knew him could but admit that he was quite as anxious to cross blades with the enemy as any of them. His talents had won him the appointment to West Point, and carried him through with the highest honors. For this he was respected by the truly brave, and hated by the rich who failed to get the appointment, and being poor and without influential friends, he found life in the Crescent City anything but to his liking.

And yet he was secretly happy, in spite of his heart wound, and feeling that he belonged to the country which had given him an education, and not to the society that gave him the cold shoulder, he was glad to serve the one and get away from the other. For the first time the world was before him, and if he failed to hew his way through it, he resolved to die in battle, which would at least make the account square between him and his country.

On the second day out, and while he sat on deck, a long, lank, Texan ranger approached him. He was a fair specimen of those brave rough riders, but on account of his uncouth appearance he was taken but little notice of by the officers on board, and it was probably this which drew him towards Walker.

"Day, stranger," said he, cheerfully.

"Good-day, sir," replied the young officer, civilly.

"Don't train with them uther chaps much?"

"No, I had rather be alone. They are brave, good fellows, but there is a difference in our social position which they are not so free to give up now as they will be when we get before the enemy."

"Grut snacks! But you're a Pinter?"

Walker bowed.

"Then why in thunder un tar aren't you jist as good as they be?"

"So I am. But they are rich and I am poor."

"Grut suff'rin' Moses! what's that got ter do with it, I'd like ter yell?"

"Nothing in reality; but if they think so I am not the one to intrude."

"Intrude! In——thunder! Young chap, I think you'n I can whallup ther hull caboodle of 'em," said the Texan, toying with a huge bowie knife which he wore in his belt together with two huge pistols.

"But what for? I don't care a snap for their company or their exclusiveness."

"Wall, lick um for fun, then."

"Oh, no, my friend," replied Walker, laughing at the pugnacious earnestness of the man. "That's all right. Don't borrow any trouble on my account."

"But, pizen take 'em, they've snubbed me."

"Oh, they have, eh? Well, probably that was on account of not knowing you. Don't mind them. They are all good fellows and mean well."

"Stranger, yeu seem tu be a good-natured sort of a cuss anyway," said he, slapping him heavily on the back.

"Oh, I don't know about that. I don't think I'm much better than other people, but I don't believe in fighting when there's no occasion for it," said Walker pleasantly.

"Waal, I likes fightin' putty good myself, I du. My name's Hank Dalton. I'm a Texas ranger, I am, an' I've been a-fightin' Injuns and Mexican Greasers for the last fifteen years."

"I am proud to know you, Mr. Dalton," said Walker, offering his hand.

"Hold on, thar, youngster; no mister to my name, if you please. I don't 'low nobody tu be so familiar with me as that. Call me Hank, but Hank Dalton when you want ter be extra perlite. What's your name?"

"Sam Walker, lieutenant in the United States Army, ordered to join General Taylor at Point Isabel."

"Good for you. I'll bet a week's grub that you're a thunderin' good feller. Why, you tork as nice as ever Sam Houston did. Goin' fer ter jine Taylor, hey? Waal, now, how'd yu like tu be a scout?"

"Capital. Nothing would please me better."

"Thunder an' pitch! Hush, now," and the burly Texan sprang to his feet and looked cautiously around, as though to make sure that no one was near. "Hush! Go with me a few miles from Palo Alto, an' I'll show yu tu about a hundred as fine Texas Rangers as ever rid a hoss," said he, with great emphasis.

"But I am to report to General Taylor."

"But how? Taylor hasn't got half men enough, an' he wouldn't put a P'inter in the ranks."

"But I'll go into the ranks if needs be."

"Oh, honeyfugle! Now, Sam, I'll tell yer somethin'. We uns are goin' ter offer ourselves tu the States government, an' we calkulate tu make a fus class showin'. I know the boys would leap clean over thar hosses if they could only be led by a genuine West P'inter. 'Cos, you see, we're sorter proud, an' don't want none of them other fandangled roosters tu make a bigger show nor we du. Come 'long with me tu Palo Alto, whar we will get hosses an' ride out in the ranch whar they are awaitin' for me."

"Where have you been?"

"In New Orleans for weepins and things that are needed afore ridin' tu jine Taylor. I've got everything on board this here boat, an' you bet yer socks that we'll turn out the tearin' finest rigged volunteers that ever flipped a Greaser. What du yu say?" he asked, earnestly.

"I am delighted with the idea. But what will General Taylor say?" said Walker, thoughtfully.

"Great grasshoppers and crockerdiles! Wouldn't he say better of you if you went to him at the head of our gang than if yu went alone?"

"You are right. I'll go with you," said the young lieutenant, leaping to his feet and grasping the huge hand of the Texan.

"Good for beans, by thunder!" and he nearly wrenched the young officer's arm out, expressing his joy.

"But do you believe they will be willing to take so young an officer as I am for their commander?"

"Lieutenant Walker, Hank Dalton has given you his word on it. They'll e'enmost bust thar throats a yellin' over it, I'll bet. Don't fret yer gizzard on that p'int."

"All right. When will you be ready to march?"

"Within ten hours after we reach Palo Alto."

"Good; and if the rest of the company are like you, I think we can get along first-rate."

"Like me! Why, bless yer soul, cap'n, I'm the titman of the gang. They're all bigger'n I am, an' a durn sight better fellers; rougher'n Mexican cactuses, but true blue, every mother's son of 'em. Like 'em! Of course you'll like 'em! Everybody likes 'em but Mexican Greasers an' Injuns. An' they'll like you, or my name aren't Hank Dalton."

"I hope so."

"An' you'll shine us up so none of them other hoss riders can take us down?"

"I'll do my best, Hank," said Walker, smiling.

"That e'n about tickles me ter death, it does, by thunder!"

On their arrival at Point Isabel, Walker followed Dalton to Palo Alto instead of reporting at once to General Taylor. Palo Alto is about ten miles from Point Isabel, and after seeing his goods shipped by the mule train in waiting, they took horses, and before night reached the ranchero's house, where the larger portion of the Texans were waiting for Dalton's return.

Hank was a great favorite among them, and it had been arranged during his absence to elect him captain of the company, but he was destined to surprise them more than they expected to surprise him.

Calling them together under a huge arbor, he introduced the youthful officer whose acquaintance he had made, and then told them that he was a West Pointer. They all gathered around and shook hands with him, and although he was a strong, well-built fellow, he seemed but a boy in the midst of those big, rough rangers.

But when Hank told them that he would become their captain if they wished it, they cheered with all their might, and showed quite as much delight as he had said they would. They grasped him warmly by the hand, and nearly tore him to pieces in their ecstasy.

Dalton was right. The rangers had made up their minds to offer themselves to General Taylor in the capacity of scouts, which he so much needed; but as they talked it over among themselves, they concluded that they should make a poor show beside the richly caparisoned cavalry troops, and on that account they had sent Hank Dalton to New Orleans to buy them things they needed most to improve their appearance.

But his returning with a real live West Pointer, who would become their captain, was more than they had ever dared to expect, and so their enthusiasm knew no bounds. A formal meeting was at once held, a company book opened, every man's name written in it, to the extent of seventy-five, after which Walker was formally elected captain, and Hank Dalton lieutenant.

By the time all this was done the boxes arrived containing the additions to their uniforms, and the whole evening was spent in adjusting them and fixing the trappings for their horses. In this business Captain Walker showed his taste and education, and when they turned out in the morning it would have been hard to have found a finer looking squadron.

By nine o'clock they were ready to march for Point Isabel to offer themselves to General Taylor, and although they did not ride like trained cavalrymen, yet each was mounted on a superb horse, and could ride through and over almost anything in the world. All they wanted was the polish which Walker could give them, to become the first body of cavalry in the country.

CHAPTER III.

GETTING QUICKLY DOWN TO BUSINESS.

It was about noon when Captain Walker led his men up before the headquarters and reported himself to General Taylor, who gave him a warm greeting, as he was anxious to have all the recent graduates from West Point with him.

"But I have not come alone, general," said he.

"So much the better, lieutenant; but you surely have not raised a company so soon."

"Come to the door and see for yourself, general."

With anxious curiosity depicted in his furrowed face, the brave old hero did as desired, and there saw one of the finest companies of mounted riflemen he had ever beheld.

"Glorious! But these are Texas rangers—how came you in command of them?"

Walker related the circumstances to the general, who listened with much interest to it.

"Bravo, lieutenant! this is indeed a romance of war. I congratulate you, and hereafter shall address you as Captain Walker."

"Thanks, general."

"Your men are the very ones I want above all others, and you may hold yourself in readiness for employment at any moment."

"The quicker, sir, the better. They are brave fellows, and will shrink at no danger, I am sure, and I, being so much younger, with my shoulder-straps still fresh from school, am anxious to show them that I am worthy to captain them."

"A noble, soldierly ambition, my boy, and I feel certain that you will do it. Your record at West Point is the very best, and I have faith in you."

"Thanks, general, and I shall try to verify it."

"You will. Adjutant Bliss will assign you to ground. Good-day, captain," and exchanging salutes, the oldest and youngest officers separated.

The next few days were given over to training and perfecting the company in cavalry evolutions, but being apt scholars and perfect riders, it did not take long to get them in good form.

At the end of the third day after their arrival, and before any of the volunteers had arrived to succor General Taylor, he sent for Captain Walker, who at once reported.

"Captain, you want dangerous work?"

"I do, general."

"Very well, I have some for you. I need not tell you that my little army is split in two, and that we have to do some hard fighting in order to maintain our position. I am afraid that the garrison opposite Matamoras, under Major Brown, will be attacked and captured, thus making my position much worse than it is. The country between Point Isabel and there swarms with Mexicans. I cannot leave my position here, for a general movement of my whole force would bring twenty men to my one down upon us. A small body would not awaken more than a proportionate number of the enemy. I wish you to take three wagon loads of ammunition under your escort and convey them to Major Brown, together with these dispatches."

"I will do it, general."

"They are all ready; march at once."

Walker saluted and returned to his company of rangers, before whose quarters stood the three ammunition wagons, all ready to proceed on the dangerous journey.

"Work, my men," said he, as they met him with much anxiety to know what the general wanted.

A shout followed the announcement.

"I will not insult you by asking if there is any one of you who will not take a desperate chance against the enemy with great odds against us, for I think I know you. But we have got to escort those ammunition wagons to Major Brown, opposite Matamoras, with the country swarming with the enemy."

"Good, we are ready," was the cry.

"Then to horse!"

In five minutes they were mounted. Nearly every man of the company had ridden over the ground and had often met the Greasers in fights, consequently neither maps nor guides were required.

A hearty cheer greeted them as they rode from the camp, Captain Walker and his lieutenant taking the lead, while the wagons moved between two squadrons of the rangers.

Precisely as they expected, the Mexicans seemed to be aware of their movement as soon as they had got outside of the American lines, although they evidently looked upon it as simply a scouting expedition, and not a determined attempt to reinforce and replenish an almost exhausted fort.

For the previous few days a fierce bombardment had been going on between the batteries before Matamoras and the fortress on the other side of the river, the one they were destined for, but the ammunition being nearly exhausted, they were only replying at long intervals, although the houses in Matamoras had nearly all been torn to pieces by the shot and shell which they had thrown into the town.

Believing that it was only a scouting party, the Mexican commander set Canales, a renowned robber who had joined the army for the sake of plunder, to watch it, he having about two hundred of the worst rough riders and cutthroats to be found in Mexico.

This fierce brave undoubtedly possessed some military talent, although he was a robber by nature and profession, and no stranger to many of the Texans, who had met him in rough fights several times.

He soon learned the strength of Walker's band, and laughing at their presumption, pretended to retreat before them for the purpose of drawing them into some treacherous place from whence they could not escape, and where he could turn upon and annihilate them at his leisure.

It was not a pleasant prospect for the little band of brave hearts, but they were not deecived in the least regarding his intentions.

"I know what his game is," said Lieutenant Hank Dalton, after they had followed Canales for three or four miles. "About two miles this side of the fort there is a ravine, wide an' deep. We had a brush with a lot of Greasers thar during the Texas fight agin 'em, an' it's a bad place. A good wide road leads inter the place, but only a narrow path leads out at the far end. If he coaxes us in thar we're gone, that's sure."

"But he won't get us in there, lieutenant," said Walker, whose keen eye was taking in everything. "There must be a road to the right or left of this one, and even if it is not so good we shall take it."

"Right, captain, thar is a road this side; I've been over it heaps of times."

"All right; let him think we are following him into this trap. I think I know how to fix him. Give me as good a description as you can of the locality."

As they rode along he explained the ravine and everything about it, having sent a few horsemen ahead as if to press the Mexicans.

While they were even speaking they saw the foremost horseman of the enemy disappear down the road leading to the trap.

The noise of the cannonading at Matamoras seemed to shake the earth they were marching on.

"Quick! Charge them to the entrance, and then rejoin us," said he to Dalton, and away he flew with about thirty of the rangers.

"Now, then, go for the fort for all your horses are worth," said he, addressing the drivers of the wagons, at the same time pointing out the road to take.

The horses were put upon a gallop, and, turning to the right, took another road, which led directly to the fort, although like all roads in that part of the country, it was a very bad one.

By the time they got past the curve, which led down into the ravine, the detachment returned, having driven the rear portion of Canale's squadron into it with some confusion.

"Sergeant Bolton, return wtih twenty-five men and make a demonstration that will keep them there; avoid an encounter as long as possible, for those wagons must reach the forts at all hazards. Ride," and, wheeling, the company proceeded to obey orders.

"Lieutenant Dalton, ride with twenty men and occupy that narrow path leading from the ravine on the other side. Hold it, and we have them caught in their own trap."

With a wild cheer he started away, at the same time saying to one of his friends who rode beside him:

"Didn't I tell yer he war a little cuss?"

Seeing these orders obeyed, Captain Walker put spurs to his horse, and rode to overtake the wagoners. The fort was already in sight, but it was not replying to the tremendous shower of shot and shell and was evidently out of ammunition.

This nerved Walker to do his utmost, and hastily dispatching one of his men to each of the detachments with orders to have them hold the enemy in the ravine as long as possible, and then to ride at full speed for the fort, he rode forward at full speed.

Canales was completely trapped. Bolton held the entrance to the ravine, and Lieutenant Dalton the exit. The Mexican brigand was not long in finding out the mistake he had made, and sent his men off in different directions where there were exits known to them, and by so doing he hoped to gain the rear of the Texans.

But before this could be accomplished the ammunition wagons had reached the exhausted fort, and the rangers turned and followed it, leaving the discomfited Mexican growling and cursing his luck.

Never was succor welcomed with wilder applause. Never were heroes of bloodless victory more highly honored than were these brave rangers and their skilful captain by the forlorn command at Fort Brown.

With a wild hurrah from the soldiers, the gunners again sprang to their guns and reopened fire upon the Mexicans on the opposite shore. This evidently astonished them very much, for they had for a long time been aware of the scarcity of powder in the entrenchment, and had treated the whole thing as a gala day affair, with only a question of time as to when the garrison would surrender.

CHAPTER IV.

LETTING SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR.

Captain Walker stood on the parapet of Fort Brown, and watched the effect of the shots from the guns, and occasionally suggesting a change in the aim of some of them.

The rangers were calmly grooming their horses, and getting ready for the next move, whatever it might be. The very earth was shaking with the fierce cannonade, which could not last much longer on the part of the Americans, as their supply of ammunition was again growing short.

Presently there came a boom of cannon from the direction of Point Isabel.

This indicated a move on the part of General Taylor. He listened with agitated heart.

By the aid of his glass he could see the Mexican troops marching in that direction, and the gaily caparisoned lancers spurring their fierce horses toward the scene of the conflict.

"Saddle up!" he shouted.

Instantly his brave command sprang to obey the order, but still in wonder regarding what the movement meant.

Again the thunder of artillery shook the earth in the distance, and away to the north arose a cloud of sulphurous smoke.

Hank Dalton heard it, and mounted the wall by the side of his youthful companion.

"What is it, cap," he asked.

"I think Taylor has either attacked the enemy at Pala Alto, or they have attacked him. At all events, there is an engagement going on," said Walker.

"That's so, as true as grass."

"And we must have a hand in it?"

"You bet."

"Are the men ready to ride?"

"All ready."

"Then let us go, for we may be of service to the general in a moment of need."

As they were about to leap down into the fort, a ten-inch shell whistled over their heads and fell close to a gun, by the side of which stood Captain Flood, the commander of the fort succeeding Major Brown. It exploded as it struck, and the gallant soldier fell in his tracks.

Captain Walker and Dalton sprang to his side, and with tender hands bore him to a grassy mound. Once and only once he opened his eyes.

Don't let them have the fort, boys," said he faintly, and then all was over.

"No, they shall never have a foot of American soil—never!" replied Walker, and every man in the garrison clenched his fists in deep resolve.

The next in command at once assumed it, and the bombardment went feebly on.

"To saddle!" shouted Walker.

The two men stood with one foot in the stirrup, and the command was hardly issued before each one was astride of his powerful steed.

The men all heard the distant cannonade, and felt that something bloody was transpiring. Even the horses felt it, and with dilated nostrils and heads erect, they drew feverish breath and pawed the earth savagely with their impatient feet.

Walker mounted his own horse and rode to the head of the column.

"Soldiers, our comrades are having hot work. We must assist them. Forward!"

A wild cheer rang out from the men, and even the stricken garrison shouted as the rangers rode from the gateway out upon the open plain.

Louder and louder grew the noise of distant battle, and nearer, too, it seemed to come.

The Mexicans at Matamoras became so much interested in the struggle which they knew was going on, and which they also could plainly hear, that they ceased their fire upon the devoted fort, and mounting their works, they bent forward with their hands to their ears to catch every wave of sound which came from the battle-field; or, they cheered loudly, so confident were they that the little army of Americans were being cut to pieces and destroyed.

Walker put spurs to his horse and dashed off toward the battle-field, followed by his sturdy men, each with a lion's heart, and each eager for the fray.

General Canales, who had been waiting for Walker and his men to return, now rode to the scene of conflict; but, as luck would have it, only half a mile in advance of the Texan rangers.

From an unhorsed ranchero they learned who it was, and then, with redoubled speed, they continued on after him.

By this time the roar of the battle had increased, and the wind was wafting vast clouds of smoke away to the left.

Canales never would have expected or looked for an enemy in his rear at that time, but crazy for a fight, that would wipe out the worse than defeat that he had suffered at the hands of Walker, he led his savage hordes headlong towards the fight.

And, indeed, he was needed there if ever, for General Taylor had driven Arista quite a distance, and just then he was checked, and a few more men, or one impetuous charge would hurl destruction upon him and his brave little army.

Canales was the man for the emergency, and quickly setting his squadrons, he led them forward with fierce yells.

It was a terrible yet beautiful sight to see these gaudily trapped horsemen plunging onward with their murderous lances poised and their streamers fluttering in the sulphurous air.

But Walker and his men were close upon him, and even before he could strike a blow they fired a deadly volley from their rifles, and then dashed in with their revolvers, emptying a saddle at every fire.

Consternation seized Canales and his men, and while the confusion was at its height, the bold rangers drew their cutlasses and completed the work they had so nobly begun.

Captain Walker's horse had been killed, but, with sword in hand, he was seeking the thickest of the fight. Two of his rangers rode to his rescue, but they were shot down just as Canales and one of his fierce rancheroes galloped down upon him.

Hastily mounting one of the horses and snatching the sword of the fallen ranger in his left hand, he spurred and received the charge of the fiery Canales and his man, catching the sword of the one upon his own and the lance of the other upon that of his wounded companion.

Dashing lance and sword aside, he escaped, and, wheeling quickly in his saddle, he fired a shot from one of the pistols

that he found in the holster, and the ranchero fell headling from his plunging horse.

"Ten thousand curses upon that boy, he has escaped me again!" cried Canales, wheeling his horse to engage him once more.

But by this time his horsemen were completely routed, for the quick eye of General Taylor had detected the turn in the tide of battle, and hastily dispatching Captain May to the assistance of Walker and his heroic Rangers, the attack front and rear was too much, and a wild panic seized Arista's army.

Almost instantly there followed one of the wildest and most horrible scenes ever witnessed on the battle-field. All discipline was lost, and officers and men, infantry and artillery, cavalry and all, became crowded together, each struggling for a chance to escape. The dead and wounded were trampled under foot, and, to add to the general terror, the long, dry grass of the prairie caught fire and quickly enveloped living, dead and wounded in a wraith of flame.

Hundreds were killed in this stampede and fire, and in less than fifteen minutes the haughty Arista's army, with which he had marched out to "gobble up" the despised North Americans, was in full retreat, and the first battle of the Mexican War, Palo Alto, was won.

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF RESACA DE LA PALMA.

As soon as the battle was over General Taylor sent for Captain Walker.

All torn and begrimed with smoke and smooch of the battle, he presented himself at the headquarters tent and reported. He was at once shown in to the commanding general, who arose and cordially extended his hand.

"Captain Walker, I have to thank you for taking it upon yourself to help me win this victory, without orders," said he.

"And I thank you, general, for giving me a chance; you sent me to relieve the fort commanded by Major Brown. I succeeded in doing so, and will make out my report tonight. Then I was not under orders, but a soldier's duty is in such a case to go to the assistance of his general and comrades. I did so," said Walker, modestly.

"And you did it nobly. I told you that you would make your mark, and you have done it."

"If so, I am content. The fort opposite Matamoras still flies the American flag, but, general, Major Brown has fallen."

"Major Brown killed?"

"Yes, general, he fell just before I left."

"There's a brave soul gone," said Taylor, sadly.

"He died where a soldier should always die, at his post of duty."

"I could have spared many men better than Major Brown. But return to your quarters. Make out your report, and give it to me in the morning early, for we shall probably have another brush with the enemy before we cross the Rio Grande. Thank the Texan Rangers for me, and good-night."

"Good-night, general," said Walker, saluting, and going from his presence.

During the night which settled so mercifully down upon the tired soldiers, all was calm and peaceful, and had it not been for the groans of the wounded as they suffered under the knife of the surgeon, the mournful tramp of burial parties, as they did the last sad offices for their fallen comrades, one would scarcely have believed that the terrible besom of war had swept over the scene.

The smoke of battle and of burning grass had been swept away by the evening breeze, and the full moon rose proudly up from her throne in the east, and bathed the world in a sheen of silvery light, beaming benignly on both friend and foe.

General Arista sent a detachment of wagons about midnight to gather up his dead. The wounded of his army had by this time received attention at the hands of our surgeons, and until long past the hour when a tired general should have sought his couch, General Taylor was going around among his brave, wounded fellows, praising them for their gallantry and consoling them in their misfortune.

But when he had finished his charitable rounds and retired to his tent, the whole camp was asleep and all was silent save the measured tread of the guards, who ever and anon answered back the outposts, "All's well."

Early the next morning the officers were astir, for Taylor had summoned them to a council of war. Captain Walker was there with the others, having with him his completed report, which he had prepared before going to rest the night before.

The scouts reported the position of the enemy, and it was decided to move forward without delay, in the hope of engaging him before he had completed his reorganization and recovered from yesterday's defeat. Breakfast was at once prepared and everything got in readiness for a march.

But there was nothing forced about it, for every soldier seemed delighted at the prospect of again engaging the enemy and finishing the flogging they had begun the day before.

Breakfast over and rations packed in knapsacks, the line of battle was formed and at once moved forward toward Resaca de la Palma, where in the distance, even now, could be seen the vanguard of the Mexicans hastening toward the chaparral.

On approaching the chaparral, General Taylor became convinced that the enemy occupied it in force, and another battle seemed inevitable, and to prepare for it the troops were halted near a convenient watering place, where they were allowed a season of repose.

"I would like a volunteer for a piece of extra hazardous scouting," said General Taylor, in the hearing of a company of volunteers.

"Gineril, I'm yer puddin' an' milk," said a long, lank Yankee, springing up and saluting him.

The general looked at him a moment in surprise, for he was the last person in the world whom he would have expected to respond to such a call.

"What's your name, my man?" he asked, at length.

"Elam W. Baxter, Company A, First Mississippi Volunteers, a born Yankee, right from Varmount; happened to be in Jackson when the sogers were goin'; joined right in

with 'um, gineral, an' here I am, right smart, I thank yer," replied the volunteer.

"Well, you give a pretty straight account of yourself," replied Taylor, laughing.

"Give us a chance, gineral, and I'll give an account of myself, you bet," replied the volunteer.

"Have you ever seen any service before now?"

"Darn it, gineral, I've seen e'enemost everything this side of kickin' the bucket."

"But the service I wish just now will subject you to great danger, and requires good judgment."

"Try me, gineral, an' if I go scewways, shoot me for a darn fool!"

"All right, I will try you. Come to my tent," said the general, riding away to a little tent that had been pitched for him, pending the coming battle.

"Gineral, I'll du my eternal best," said he.

"That's all I can ask. Go at once; you see that range of hills and the opening between them?"

"Yes."

"I suspect the enemy is strong there; find out all about it."

"I'll du it, gineral!" and away he started, armed only with a pair of pistols and a short sword.

Meanwhile Captain Walker, Captain McCall, Captain C. F. Smith and a party of rangers were ordered to advance and reconnoiter the enemy's position on the left, near the field of Resaca de la Palma, and after skirmishing they found him in force.

The position chosen by the enemy for the second day's battle was a most admirable one for defensive warfare. By rights it should be called a ravine instead of a field. It was about two hundred feet wide, and from four to six feet deep, being crossed at right angles by a road leading to Matamoras. The ridges on each side were covered with dense rows of chaparral, utterly impenetrable to horse, and defying every weapon save the bayonet.

On the return of Baxter he reported that he had succeeded in creeping up near enough to look through the intervening chaparral, and found that the enemy lay in double rows, both in the ravine and in the thicket nearest to the American lines, and that another line of them extended through the chaparral on the opposite bank.

Three powerful batteries were placed so as to completely sweep the road, their fires at the same time crossing each other.

Taylor thanked his successful spy, and sent him back to his regiment, which was by this time getting ready to take its place in the line of battle, and he was received by a rousing cheer by both his own company and the whole regiment.

The battle ground presented a marked contrast to Palo Alto, where the fighting was in an open field, and through such a pass, defended by six thousand men, must Taylor's little army of less than two thousand men force its way if it succeeded in reaching Matamoras.

But the doughty old hero had as much confidence in his men as they had in him, and never for a moment did officer or soldier hesitate; on the contrary, they seemed restive and eager for the fray.

After the American army had partaken of a hearty dinner, and all had become rested and refreshed, Captains McCall and Smith were ordered to advance and bring on the action, which, from the first, seemed destined to be one of artillery.

It cannot be said that the discipline of Taylor's army was any better than that of Arista's, if, indeed, it was so good; but at length superior bravery and dash on our side prevailed, and gradually, foot by foot, the Mexicans were driven with the bayonet through the chaparral, and forced to take refuge in a more distant and secure position.

Cheer upon cheer were given by the Americans engaged, and re-echoed by their restless comrades, who had not yet been ordered into the fight. Especially was the cavalry and the Texas rangers anxious to take part in the battle, but as yet no opportunity had offered itself.

And yet the strife did not cease with the retreat of the Mexican infantry. The batteries in the ravine still poured into the heart of the American infantry storms of iron hail, mowing the brave fellows down by scores, while on the very verge of victory.

The eagle eye of General Taylor saw that the fate of the day hung upon these guns, and he hastily ordered Captain May, of the regular cavalry, and Captain Walker, of the Texan Rangers, to report to him. Two braver or more dashing young officers never spurred their horses to the trumpet's call.

"Captains, charge those batteries!" said he, pointing to the Mexican stronghold.

They both saluted and turned their horses to ride away.

"And take them!" he added, with big emphasis.

Captain May and his men took the lead, closely followed by the rangers, and the whole command swept down the road towards the ravine.

The Mexicans were scattered and the guns were ours. But they were not disposed to submit to such a fate, and in a few moments they rallied, with several companies of infantry who had hurried to their rescue, and with fixed bayonets returned to the shock. Throwing themselves stubbornly between their guns, they wielded their swords hand to hand with the cavalry.

But how long could they stand before the rifles and pistols of the rangers, and the fierce onslaught of the brave dragoons of Captain May? One by one they sank, and the battery with its flag was securely ours. General La Vega was among the captured. He was struck at by May in the first charge, but parrying the blow, he called his troops around him, and was on the point of discharging a cannon, when Captain Walker charged upon it with his rangers, and ordered him to surrender.

"What! to a boy?" he exclaimed, gazing at Walker.

"To Captain Walker, if you please," replied the bold young officer, proudly; and La Vega at once handed him his sword, and was afterwards conducted to General Taylor.

Three separate and fierce charges were made by the Mexicans to regain the battery, but Walker and May, with their own hands, assisted by the dragoons, turned the guns upon them with such terrible effect that the attempt was abandoned.

In the meantime a fearful struggle was going on in other portions of the field; infantry, artillery and cavalry being

engaged. A party under Lieutenant Woods actually forced their way into General Arista's camp, and captured it after a bloody hand to hand fight.

A large body of lancers was sent to retake it, and they succeeded in doing so, and in killing Lieutenant Cochrane and about twenty men, although the Americans soon rallied and drove them out most effectually.

"Three cheers for Hail Columbit, Yankee Doodle, Uncle Sam, Star Spangled Banner, and General Zack Taylor!" yelled Elam Baxter, leaping upon a cannon he had helped to capture, and swinging his hat.

Cheer upon cheer was given, and taken up by the soldiers in other portions of the field. The battle was practically won now, and General Taylor was busily engaged putting the finishing touches to it, although there was bloody work to do yet.

Captain Walker was ordered to charge a column of lancers, which had stolen around to the Americans' right, and was now coming down like a whirlwind, all unheeding the shower of grape that was carrying destruction into their ranks.

The charge was one of the neatest and fiercest of the battle. The Rangers rode out to meet them, and although the Mexicans were three to one, the rifles of his men made the difference not quite so great before the two bodies met in the shock of battle, and then superior skill and bravery soon bore its fruit, and the lancers who still occupied saddles turned and fled towards Matamoras, and the battle of Resaca de la Palma was won.

CHAPTER VI.

ADVENTURES AFTER THE BATTLE.

The haughty Arista was a second time flying with his well-appointed army before a mere handful of men whom he had affected to despise, and for whose crushing and utter wiping out he had left Matamoras and crossed the Rio Grande with his troops bedecked in holiday attire.

General Arista had reported the battle of Palo Alto a victory, and great was the rejoicing at Matamoras in honor thereof, and the people had all assembled when the battle of Resaca de la Palma commenced, to see the victorious braggart return with what should be left of the vanquished American army.

But the first arrival of fugitives, the opening of fire again from the garrison; the roar of cannon in the rear of their countrymen, swelling louder, fiercer and nearer all the while, seemed to be but poor harbingers of victory.

Anxiety deepened into racking intensity, and pale, terror-stricken faces gazed silently towards the east. In a few moments their routed army came dashing through the bushes which lined the opposite shore, treading down and riding over each other as they hurried wildly on to gain the river bank. Terror and eager haste were depicted in the countenances of the fugitives as they rushed onward to the water's edge, where they imagined there was safety.

All distinction of rank was lost in the common sense of extreme danger.

The terrible Americans of the North were in their rear, the city of refuge on the opposite shore.

Then a knowledge of disaster flashed upon those waiting, anxious ones. Then arose a wail, and Matamoras rang with a cry such as she had never heard before—one of misery and despair.

All discipline and order was at an end, although the guns from the fort and the army had ceased their death-dealing. Horses and mules, riderless, wounded themselves or bearing wounded soldiers, who shrieked at every step as their wounds bled afresh, went tearing through the streets to add to the general terror and dismay, while thousands of infuriated Mexican soldiers poured along the streets for rapine and plunder.

Women and children fled to the ball-rooms, where preparations had been made for celebrating the victory which General Arista had promised them, and tore the flags, wreaths and ornaments from the walls. Here they were found by scores of lawless rancheros who burst upon them in the hurry and heat of uncontrollable passion.

Crime revelled that night in the halls and better residences of Matamoras.

The inhabitants believed that General Taylor would cross the river and attack the city, and those possessing valuables secured them and fled to the country. But the evil spirit of robbery and rapine encountered them there also, and the unfortunte exiles were overtaken and robbed, and murdered without hindrance or mercy. Matamoras suffered more at the result of Resaca de la Palma from her own citizens than from the sword of the enemy.

The American army followed so closely upon the retreating Mexicans that they could easily have slaughtered more of them had they not been ordered to cease firing and to camp on the shores of the Rio Grande, opposite to the frightened and demoralized city of Matamoras.

Captain Walker, however, was ordered to cross with his own men, and supported by two companies of infantry, for the purpose of watching the maneuvers of the enemy, his landing and camp on the other side being protected by a battery of eighteen-pounders and the fort lower down.

He selected companies A and B, Mississippi Volunteers, they being in better condition than any of the others, and without loss of time the crossing was effected, and a lodgment made on undoubted Mexican soil, young Captain Walker being the first to plant an American flag there.

The Mexicans, however, were too much broken and demoralized to offer any resistance or opposition.

Elam Baxter was, of course, among the company, having escaped all harm during the battle, and after his return from the scouting, he and his company had been sent to another portion of the field, where they were held in reserve.

Elam had been a favorite with his company from the first, but after serving General Taylor so handsomely, he was regarded as a genuine hero. He was full almost to bursting with patriotic enthusiasm, and his quaint speeches kept everybody in good humor. In fact, he was a good match for Hank Dalton, of the Texas Rangers, either in making fun or telling stories.

About nine o'clock, and after Walker's men had partaken

of their supper, the horses cared for, and the guards set, the mayor of the city came into his camp with a flag of truce, and asked for a detachment of soldiers to defend the residences of certain wealthy citizens in imminent danger of being pillaged by the lawless rancheros who were prowling about the city in quest of plunder and revenge. Even some of General Canales' men, together with the band of outlaws under Romano Falcon, were among the most dreaded. In fact, the better portion of the citizens feared Canales himself.

Captain Walker declined to grant his request, as it exceeded his orders, but promised to communicate with General Taylor on the subject, and follow his instructions.

"Goldarn my buttons, if they aren't eatin' each other up," said Baxter, after hearing of the petition.

"Waal, if thar stomicks can stand it, we can," said Hank Dalton.

Captain Walker's messenger returned from General Taylor's headquarters with this reply:

"CAPTAIN WALKER: Keep your eye on the enemy above all things; but use your own judgment regarding the affair you mentioned. Z. TAYLOR."

"That settles it," said Walker, and he at once made arrangements for the security of his camp, after which he selected twenty-five men from the infantry and his own company to accompany him on an expedition into the heart of the city, leaving the camp in command of Lieutenant Hank Dalton.

As Walker rode into the square, he was approached by a most beautiful senorita, one of the lovely Spanish maidens, of whom poets write and rave. She was beautiful indeed, but her general appearance betokened extreme anguish and fear.

"Senor Americano," said she, catching at the bridle of Walker's horse, "we are being robbed and pillaged by rancheros; come and defend us."

"Where, senorita?"

"A hundred rancheros are pillaging our homes just above here. Pity us, Senor Americano," said she, in earnest but mournful tones.

"Will some one guide us to them?"

"I will, senor."

"But you are not mounted, and in this wild panic might be trodden under foot and killed," said he, holding up his hand to those who followed as a signal for a halt.

"But I can ride, senor," said she, archly, casting glances at a seat behind his saddle.

"With me?"

"Si, senor."

"Good! Your hand."

Taking her by the hand and removing his foot from the stirrup, she lifted her own into it with ease and grace, and he drew her up to a seat behind him in less time than it takes to write it.

"Can you ride there, senorita?"

"Si, senor. Spur on," said she, adjusting herself and placing one of her bare, white arms around his waist.

Walker turned to his command, who had by this time halted just behind.

"Forward, march!" and, putting spurs to his horse, he led the way, directed by the beautiful girl who rode behind him.

"I swow to gracious, the capting's picked up a gal!" said Baxter, in high glee, at the same time looking around to see if some such good fortune did not await him.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIGHT WITH THE PILLAGERS.

Scarcely a word passed between Captain Walker and the beautiful Mexican girl who had flown to him for protection against the rancheros who had taken advantage of the general panic which followed the defeat of the army of Arista at Resca de la Palma, and whom he had assisted to a seat behind him on his own gallant steed.

The command dashed after its leader as he spurred through a wide square and into a street leading from it in a westerly direction.

They had not galloped a dozen rods before they came upon a band of more than fifty fierce-looking rancheros, loaded with spoil, and going from house to house, robbing, murdering, outraging and producing the utmost terror among the shrieking inhabitants of the locality, one of the best in Matamoras. One or two houses in the row had been fired by the rascals to further the work of intimidation. Gun shots were occasionally heard above the confusion, and yells and curses greeted the ear on every side as Walker and his troop dashed upon the scene.

"You must alight now, senorita," said he.

"Si, senor—thanks," she said, leaping lightly down.

"I trust we may meet again."

"Yes. Adios!" and she waved her hand, laden with a kiss, as he wheeled his horse away.

"Draw sabers! Charge!" he called, drawing his own and spurring his eager horse.

The command was quickly obeyed, and headlong rode those gallant fellows, charging fiercely upon the swarms of plunder-laden robbers who thronged the street, felling them on either side, and instantly producing the wildest panic and consternation.

Those who did not fall under the flashing broad-swords of the rangers threw down their plunder and took to their heels, crying:

"Americanos—Americanos!"

In ten minutes every rascal who had not fallen had himself out of the neighborhood, leaving the most of their plunder behind. Scarcely one of them attempted any resistance, and many of them who had no time to mount their waiting horses left them as prizes to the rangers, who were not slow in appropriating them.

When all was over, Walker drew up his men in the middle of the street for the purpose of learning what the casualties had been, if any, and of awaiting events.

Not one of his men had received a scratch even, and while they were thus assembled, Walker was approached by the same beautiful Mexican girl, leaning on the arm of a

fine looking old gentleman, and evidently one of considerable importance.

"Thanks, senor capitan," said she. "My father, Senor Gabella, also wishes to thank you."

The old gentleman approached and extended his hand to Walker, who still sat in his saddle.

"Young captain, you may be an enemy of our government and its mad policy, but you are certainly a friend to civilization and order. In the name of the people of Matamoras, I thank you for this protection," said he, in firm, good English.

"Can I be of any further service to you?"

"You have done your work well, and as a slight token of our gratitude, will not you and your men accept our hospitality?"

Captain Walker turned to his men.

"What say you, comrades?"

"Gosh darn, yes. If the old rooster wants ter treat, don't let's tear a shingle off his house by not takin' in his provinder," said Baxter.

By this time the troop was surrounded by a large concourse of ladies and gentlemen, each of which seemed anxious to extend to them some token of gratitude.

"Very well, Baxter, you take one-half of the command and I will remain with the other until your return," said Walker, resolved on being prepared for any emergency.

"Not by a goldarned sight, cap'n, unless you command it," said Baxter, saluting.

"I command," said Walker, calmly.

"That ere settles it, cap'n," and wheeling around, he selected about one-half the troop, who at once dismounted and followed several of the citizens into their houses, where preparations were at once made to give them a banquet.

Senor Gabella hastened back to his mansion to make preparations for the reception of the Americans with their captain after Baxter returned with his squad, but his daughter, Bianca, remained near Walker, holding his horse by the bridle rein, while conversing with him upon the tragic events of the past few hours.

She seemed greatly taken with the brave young officer, as he was with her, and in spite of the grim subject on which they were conversing, there were lights in the eyes of both which plainly showed that it would have been easy to have entirely forgotten that the blast of war was even sounding in their ears, and both their hearts to have fallen into the melody of a softer hymn.

Presently, however, Baxter and his men came out of the houses where they had been entertained so sumptuously, and at once went to saddle again, although it was plain to be seen that the wine they had drank had put them upon their metal, and that they were feeling first-rate.

Baxter approached and saluted his captain.

"You were well received?" he asked.

"Well, captain, I never seen such wine, such grub an' such girls since I was born. Go in an' try 'em."

"You will come, senor capitan?" said Bianca, appealingly.

"You shall command, senorita."

"Then come."

"Baxter, don't let your enthusiasm run away with you. Keep a sharp watch on everything and everybody until I return."

"Watch! Why, capting, I won't let a flea bite my hoss, that I don't go for him."

"Very well; remember," saying which he threw himself from his saddle, and giving the reins to Baxter, he offered his arm to the beautiful Mexican maiden and led her away to the most pretentious mansion on the street, followed by the others of his men who had not yet been received.

On entering the mansion he was greeted by a bevy of beautiful Mexican women, and quite a number of the better class of Mexican gentlemen, merchants and professional men, who also welcomed him and his free rough riders to their homes and their hospitalities.

He found, as he might have expected, that feeling ran high regarding the war which had just now opened between the United States and Mexico, and opened so disastrously for them, but with high, good taste he took no part in the controversies brought up, and simply proclaimed himself an officer, acting under a higher authority, bent solely upon doing his duty.

Senor Gabella conducted Walker and his men to a spacious chamber, wherein had been spread a long table covered with all sorts of rare fruits and wines, and in the name of the people of Matamoras welcomed him and his to the bounty he had helped to protect. The house was ablaze with light.

It is needless to say that the men fell to with that rough zest which characterized them in everything they did, and to make the banquet all the more agreeable and attractive, a beautiful Mexican lass, or lady, stood by each of them, and served them with her own hands.

Captain Walker was, of course, attended by the beautiful Senorita Bianca, and it was evident to all that the longer they were in each other's company the more they became interested in each other, and the more they seemed to be lost to everybody around them. She clung closely to the brave young officer's side, and he seemed to see no other lights than those which flashed from her sparkling black eyes.

But trouble was brewing for them.

Several times during the reception Walker had noticed a tall, dark man, dressed in the uniform of a Mexican officer of the higher grade, pass and repass them on the opposite side of the table at which they stood, eyeing him with a look of the most intense hate; and finally, finding that he seemed to be well known and respected by the Mexicans present, he ventured to ask Bianca who he was.

"You have heard of Canales, senor?"

"Yes, I heard of him and have fought with him. Probably he recognizes me, and for that reason he is taking particular pains to frown upon me so offensively every time I catch his eye," said he, with some warmth.

"Peace, senor. It is not that alone," she said, placing her hand familiarly upon his arm.

"Not that alone. What else could it be?"

"I will tell you. My father is very rich, and I am his only child. He was at one time the chief justice of Mexico, but differing in politics with the present government, he has been thrown aside to make room for Montague. This Canales is a brave man in his way, and is famous for many

things, a very few of which my father applauds. He manages to maintain his position in life, although it is greatly suspected that he is the chief of the very rancheros who were pillaging us to-night, and whom you so gallantly drove away."

"Ah, that accounts for it still further," said Walker.

"Nor is this all. He has long been a suitor for my hand in marriage," said she, blushing.

"Indeed!"

"Si, senor, but my father will not listen to his suit, and he knows that I detest and dread him in whatever shape he presents himself."

"But why is he tolerated here?"

"Because of the political position which he holds, for in spite of the general suspicion which tarnishes his name, he is an acknowledged power in the land."

"But he evidently does not love me, perhaps because of my success over him in the field of battle, and perhaps because——"

He paused and looked down into her beautiful face.

"I understand you, senor capitan. He frowns because I smile upon you, and because you routed his rancheros."

"His rancheros; are you sure?"

"Common report says he is the secret chief of them."

"Then I understand it all. Would you have me resent his impudent stare?"

"No, not unless he insults you on your own account. This is all on my account, senor," said she, smiling.

"Very well, I shall be guided by you."

Hardly had he finished speaking, and while they were pledging each other in a glass of wine, Canales, in an angry mood, strode past them and struck the glass which Walker held to the floor.

Quick as a flash Walker sent out his right hand and felled the insulting bully to the floor.

In an instant there was a rush and the wildest confusion imaginable. Women shrieked and men drew their weapons for instant use.

Canales attempted to arise, but Walker drew his sword and held him to the floor.

"Apologize, or you shall never arise without further degradation," said he.

Bianca clung to him, and her father pressed forward to restore peace.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMETHING LITTLE ASIDE.

"You are a coward, thus to take advantage of a man," said Canales.

"You lie, if you say I am a coward."

"You have friends here."

"And so have you."

"But yours outnumber mine."

"I'll send them all away and fight you in any style you may name. Get up."

Canales struggled to his feet.

At that moment Senor Gabella forced his way between them.

"Peace, gentlemen, in my house, and in the presence of ladies. Peace, I say, nay, I command!" said the old man fiercely.

"Senor Gabella, I was the first assaulted and insulted, as your daughter can attest," said Walker.

"That I admit," said Canales, "and on account of the ladies present I apologize—that is to them—but to you, senor capitan, may I hope that we may be enabled to settle our differences at some other time and place?" said Canales.

"Name your time and place, senor," said Walker haughtily.

"To-morrow at noon, at a point outside of Matamoras, of which you will be well informed."

"It is well, I will meet you. You know where a message will find me," and he handed him a plain card with his name on it, to which he had added in pencil his rank and address.

"You shall hear from me," said Canales, striding from the room, the Rangers frowning upon him as he did so.

"That means a duel, senor," said Bianca.

"I am aware of that fact, my lady," he replied.

"But I thought you North Americans never dueled?"

"We always resent insults, and at the same time try to accommodate those who insult us if they have the courage to demand satisfaction."

"You are rash, captain," said Senor Gabella, "for Canales is accounted the best shot and swordsman in Mexico."

"I may be defeated by him, senor, but I can try hard not to be," said Walker, modestly.

"Spoken like a brave soldier," said the old man, extending his hand; "one thing I can assure you of, there is not an honest man or woman in Matamoras or Mexico either, for that matter, who would not rejoice at your success over him."

"I am so sorry that this has transpired," said Bianca, taking the arm which Walker offered, as he conducted her from the refreshment room to the parlor where there was music.

"I am sorry that it transpired in your presence."

"But will you meet him?"

"To be sure, if he gives me a chance, and General Taylor does not prevent it."

The beautiful girl remained silent and thoughtful, and her father conducted them to the center of the room, where a large number of gayly dressed people were gathered, and there introduced him to them. It was a personal continuation of the ovation which before then had only been general, and young Walker found himself a worshiped hero.

But Walker felt it to be his duty to return to the camp where he had left Hank Dalton in command, for he could not even guess what had taken place during his absence, and besides, there might be other localities where his presence was needed.

So he ordered his men to horse, and lingered only a moment to converse with the beautiful Bianca, who clung to him and appeared loth to allow of a separation.

"It is against the rules of your army to engage in duels, is it not?" she asked.

"It is. But we sometimes step outside of those rules if it can be done without the knowledge of our superiors."

"But if your commanding general should know of it beforehand, he would prevent it, would he not?"

"Most undoubtedly. But have no fears for me, Bianca; I shoot and fence tolerably well, and besides, being the challenged party, I can choose any weapons I like."

"But what one will you choose?"

"Well, I have not made up my mind yet. But rest in peace. You shall hear from me again, never fear."

"I—I might hear of your death, senor capitan, for this Canales is a very mad, very dangerous man."

"But none the more to be feared on that account. Adieu. If I am quartered near you for any length of time, may I hope to see you often?" he asked, taking her hand in his as he lingered by the front door.

"I should be only too happy to see you—see you every day, senor," said she blushing slightly.

"Farewell," and raising her beautiful hand to his lips, he turned away and vaulted into his saddle, kissing his hand back to her as he did so, then quickly giving orders, the squadron wheeled to the right and galloped away toward the great square.

"Gosh all hemlock, but aren't she just a reg'lar rumbustic beauty?" said Baxter, as they rode away. "Darn 'em all, they every mother son on 'em get a darned sight better lookin' gal than I did. Jest my confounded luck, ter get next to an old cross-eyed gal that stuck ter me like a flea ter a vagrant dog. But it's all right; I'll make a sensation 'mong 'em afore I skip out."

At the head of his brave squadron of Rangers, Walker rode through the city, but encountered only one other gang of rancheros, whom he dispersed even quicker than he did the first. In fact, the general panic, and the belief that General Taylor's army was about taking possession of the city, drove Arista and his broken army out of it into the country, and nearly all of the rancheros and cut-throats had followed, leaving the city nearly deserted, save by women and non-combatants.

On returning to camp, Walker found everything quiet, and an hour or two was spent in talking over the events of the day and evening, before the Rangers turned in for the night. It had, indeed, been a glorious day—one in which a little army of gallant spirits had made one of the most brilliant pages in the great book of history.

"Good-night, Hank; I may want you for a little private business to-morrow," said Walker, as he was about to retire for the night.

"All right, cap; I'm yer grasshopper," said the brave, rough-and-ready Ranger.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUEL.

The next day was one of bustle and activity, notwithstanding the last sad rites were being performed for so many gallant fellows who had fallen in battle.

Captain Walker held Matamoras, and at about noon he was visited by General Taylor and staff, to whom he reported his actions, and was warmly applauded.

While he was speaking a Mexican came through the lines and handed a letter to the general, and then withdrew.

The old hero read it and glanced anxiously at Walker.

"This will never do, Captain Walker," he said, sternly.

"What, general?"

"This duel with Canales. You failed to report that part of your doings last night. This letter informs me of it."

"General, I was wrong in not doing so. But he insulted me in the presence of ladies at the house of Senor Gabella, for which I promptly knocked him down. On regaining his feet he intimated that he would meet me somewhere on the outskirts of the city to-day."

"But have you received the challenge yet?"

"No, general, I have heard nothing from him. But who could have sent you this letter?"

He never suspected Bianca Gabella.

"He might have sent it himself, to prevent the meeting," said the old man, smiling. "But he is a desperate scoundrel and a noted duelist."

"So I am told."

"But you must not meet him."

"General, if——"

"Not a word. You are worth a dozen of him, and should he succeed in killing you, it would deprive me of a valuable soldier that I cannot afford to lose. Besides, it is unfair."

"Gineral, if yer'll 'low me, I'll 'comerdate that 'ar greaser instead of the cap," said Hank Dalton, who was standing by.

"No—no! I will not hear of it."

"Then I have another proposition," said he.

"What is it?"

"Cap'n Walker's the challenged party, an' has a right ter chuse his weepins. Now, seein' as how he thinks ter get the best of him on 'count of his bein' a reg'lar duelist, suppose we have a little fun out of the 'fair. If he sends a challenge, let him answer yes, an' say as how he'll meet him with brass five-pounders at a hundred yards."

The old general laughed heartily, and walked away without making any reply, leaving them to understand that he should not oppose a little fun of that kind, and so the two officers shook hands over it.

In the course of half an hour the challenge arrived, couched in the most hyperbolic language, and assuring Walker that he should only be too ready to meet him anywhere, with any sort of weapons he might name, but suggested a level field on the shores of the Rio Grande about two miles above the city as a convenient place to fight.

Walker, who had entered into the sport of the affair, at once replied, accepting his challenge, and naming five-pound brass pieces, at one hundred yards, as the weapons to be used.

It is needless to say that Canales was highly enraged at this, but he had written the young American such a presumptuous challenge, that he felt that he could not possibly back out now, and so, with curses loud and deep upon the mean Yankee's trick, he began to make preparations.

As the hour approached, Walker took with him Hank Dalton and Baxter as seconds, and five members of his company to drag the field-piece to the scene of action, and

they arrived there amid much jollity, only about ten minutes ahead of Canales.

Both Dalton and Baxter were quite used to dueling, and meeting Canales' seconds, they arranged the preliminaries, after several protests on the part of the Mexicans, and finally the ground was marked out, the two cannons placed in position and loaded with solid shot, and Canales and Walker were given torches, and placed at their respective guns.

Each man stood about a yard from his gun, and each was then allowed three minutes to sight it upon the other, after which, at the word "one," they were to lift their torches; at "two," they were to hold them over the priming of the guns, and at "three" they were to apply them.

Walker was of course perfectly at home in this artillery practice, and Canales was not, although the advantage was no more on his part than it would have been on the part of the wily Mexican had Walker consented to fight him with either pistols or swords.

Each conformed to the word, and at "three" both pieces exploded. Canales' bullet whistled past about a yard from Walker, whilst that sent by the young American soldier went to its mark like a Parthian arrow.

A cry of horror went up from the Americans, for they had not expected this; but the Mexicans laughed derisively, picked up the body of their fallen principal, placed it in a covered ambulance, and taking their gun, they hurried by a roundabout road back to Matamoras, leaving the Americans standing there in wonder.

But presently a Mexican peasant joined them. He, too, was smiling as though something exceedingly funny had taken place, and when questioned, informed them that a trick had been played upon them; that a common soldier, dressed to suit, had been substituted for Canales, and that the general had ridden back to Matamoras all unharmed.

"Waal, gosh durn my buttons," said Baxter, "that may be awful funny for them, but I wonder what that 'ar other greaser thinks about it?"

"I'll be eternally hornswoggled if that aren't the durnest, meanest piece of business that I ever hearn tell on," added Dalton.

"It was contemptible, and worthy of a Mexican general," said Walker. "But we shall meet again."

CHAPTER X.

THE VICTORIOUS AMERICANS.

Everything was now in readiness for General Taylor and his little army of victors to cross the Rio Grande and take possession of Matamoras.

Arista and his army, together with such citizens as clung to his fortunes, were in full retreat.

Captain Walker and his little command, although reinforced with the remainder of the Texan Rangers, still held their camp in the heart of the city, while the main army under Taylor was encamped a mile or so outside of the city limits, and a portion of it, under General Twiggs, marched for Sefalvo, for the purpose of keeping track of the Mexican army.

Baxter was very attentive to his love, as was Walker to Bianca Gabella; but, like him, he had a rival, although General Canales had long ago marched with Arista's army to the interior, leaving the young American officer master of the field for the present.

Baxter's rival was a pompous, fiery, Mexican youth, full of wealth and consequence, and not inclined to allow any other shadow than his own to fall athwart his mistress' threshold.

His name was Muelo, and he claimed to be descended from a long line of Spanish Hidalgos in whose veins ran the purple blood of Ferdinand and Isabella, and she was known in Monterey as the Senorita Alvia Portabello, also claiming high lineage.

She was very handsome and very much of a flirt, and nothing seemed to delight her more than to have half a dozen lovers on the string, and keep one set against the other. She seemed to grow even more beautiful under the excitement.

Baxter had met her in the course of his duty as assistant Provost Marshal of Matamoras, after its formal surrender to General Taylor, and fallen deeply in love with her. She had encouraged his attentions, and even led him to believe that he was the favored one above all others.

Finally the existence of a rival became known to the high-toned Mexican lover, and he at once proceeded to ascertain his rank and condition, for, being exceedingly high-toned, he could not tarnish his escutcheon by quarreling with anybody beneath him.

But when he found that Baxter was only a private soldier, or at best a brevet-lieutenant, his disgust knew no bounds, and he simply said he should horsewhip him at the first meeting, and give him a lesson that he would not forget.

Of course such a threat was not long in getting legs, and not long in reaching the ears of Baxter, and as may well be supposed, it woke up a nest of hornets.

Hank Dalton was the one who conveyed the news to him, for he delighted in anything which would break the monotony of camp life; and those who knew him will feel assured that the smallest favors in this respect would be acceptable.

"What's that, Hank? This 'ere blue-blooded rooster goin' ter horsewhip me on sight?" said he.

"That's what I hearn, ole man," replied Dalton.

"Great thunder!" and Baxter leaped to his feet.

"Don't get 'cited, Bax," said he, laughing.

"'Cited! Don't get—— Say, Hank, want ter go 'long with me for a circus?"

"A what?" asked Hank, still laughing.

"A circus."

"Where?"

"Up in town here a bit."

"I don't mind, if it's goin' ter be somethin' 'citin'."

"Waal, I'll try to make it interestin'. He is a-goin' ter hosswhip me, hey?"

"Waal, I hearn so."

"All right. Come 'long with me."

"Hold on. Got ter see the cap fust."

"Oh, he'll let us go."

"Let's see fust."

They went to Captain Walker, who was then in command, and asked half a day's leave of absence. This was readily granted, for life was dull in camp and had settled down to simple routine duty, while Taylor was making preparations for following the enemy towards Monterey with his now augmented army of anxious volunteers, representing nearly every State in the Union.

So the two friends started in the direction of the residence of Elam's lady love, taking a glass or two of wine on the way, and discussing the prospect of fun. They were both armed, of course, but neither of them thought of using their weapons except in case of emergency.

They met with no particular adventure until they reached the house of the inamorata, and just then they espied Muelo coming from the house. She had followed him to the door, and was in the act of parting with him, seemingly as cordially as she had ever parted with him, and this gave our Yankee lover the first set-back, and the demon of jealousy at once took possession of his breast.

"Gosh all hemlock! she seems ter kinder cotton ter him," said Baxter.

"Of course she does. You ain't no sort of a chap for these Mexican gals."

"Maybe not, but I'll bet a cow agin a can of spruce gum that I ken lick the beeswax out of that yer chap in ten minits," said Baxter, clenching his fists.

"Hail him," said Hank, after he had left the house and was just coming out upon the street.

"Hail him! I'll nail him," said Baxter, and walking across the street he approached his rival, who was walking briskly and smilingly away.

Walking directly up to him he said:

"Say, yu, my name's Elam W. Baxter. Want ter take a bite of me?"

"I don't know you," said Muelo, attempting to avoid him and pass along.

"Swaller yer words, or I'll give yer an interduction that'll make yer head swim," said Baxter.

"What do you mean, fellow?"

"I'm a-shinin' up ter that 'ere gal yer just left, an' yer gin it out as how yer'd hosswhip me on sight. Now du it if yer said so, an' if yer didn't say so, say so."

"I don't know you, senor, nor am I familiar with the drift of your conversation," said the Mexican.

"Waal, if yer don't stop bein' familiar with that 'ere gal I'll give yer a drift."

"Don't aggravate me, fellow, or I may become dangerous."

"Consarn yer picter, that's just what I want yer tu du. Yer a half-breed; a greaser."

"Beware of me, sir," said he, trying to get away.

"Lick him for fun, Bax," said Dalton, who stood near at hand.

"Skin my buttons if I don't," said he, and knocking down a pistol which the Mexican had drawn in the meantime, he sailed into him Yankee fashion, and gave him such a drubbing as the snob never met with before.

"Give him one for me, Bax!"

"There ye are," and he did it.

"Now one fur the American eagle."

"An' thar's one for ther burd of freedom," said Baxter, administering a parting kick, which materially assisted Muelo in his homeward flight.

"Good boy!"

"How's that for gettin' a cowhidin'?"

"Warn't much cow hide 'bout dat, I'll be continerly hornswoggled if thar war," said Dalton.

"Come tu think on it, Hank, thar was jist a grain of cow hide 'bout it."

"Whar?"

"In the toe of my bute which I sent in under his coat-tails with the compliments of the American eagle," said Baxter, laughing.

"That's so, Bax," and he joined in the laugh. "But let's call on the gal," he added.

"All right, an' I'll show you one of the goldurnedest, alfiredest purty she greasers yer ever snapped yer eyes on. Come along," and he at once began to slick himself up a bit.

The servant at once admitted them, and his beautiful mistress tendered them both a kindly and cordial reception, just as much delighted, apparently, as though he had not been a moment before knocking the tar out of her other admirer. Alvia Portabello was really a very accomplished lady, and after conducting them to an arbor where some refreshments were served, she entertained them with her guitar. A male and female attendant then danced the fandango before them.

"Bax, I think as how I'll take a slip of that thar fandango myself," said Dalton, springing to his feet, while the smitten Yankee sat looking foolishly into the eyes of his charmer.

"Go it, Hank," said he.

And Hank did go it, being an expert in this peculiarly Spanish dance, and in spite of his uncouth proportions, he followed the pretty little dancing maid through its intricacies with more grace and suppleness than one would have believed him to possess.

This performance pleased their fair entertainer very much, and she laughed so delightedly over it that Baxter felt mad because he had not danced it himself.

"You dance exceedingly well, senor," said she.

"Waal, I don't know 'bout that, but I guess I dance exceedingly strong," said Hank.

Some more refreshments followed, and after many attempts on the part of Baxter to tear himself away, they at length took their leave with a pressing invitation to call again.

"Call agin? Great thunder, he'd call and stay the rest of his nat'ral born days," said Hank, as they started from the gate.

The rippling laugh which she gave voice to as she saluted them with her fan had scarcely died away, when they were confronted by half a dozen armed ruffians, led by Muelo.

"Here's the rest of yer circus, Bax," said Dalton, drawing his revolver.

"Oh, yer come back for some more, hey?" said Baxter, addressing their leader.

"At them!" was his only reply.

His cowardly hirelings were about to spring upon them with their huge knives, when they both darted to one side

and opened fire upon them, knocking three or four of them over, so that they couldn't be stood up again, and then the others took to their heels and quickly disappeared in the neighboring gardens.

Both Hank and Baxter sent shots after them, but beyond wounding Muelo, they did no further damage that they could see.

"Right smart, I reckon," said Baxter, extending his hand to Dalton. "Wonder if they want any more of the American eagle?"

"They don't act as though they did. Hello, what's this 'ere?" he asked, picking up a letter which Muelo had dropped in his flight. It's a letter. Wonder what's in it?" and he proceeded to read. "Why, make gun meat of me if it ain't a letter from Canales. An' it has somethin' ter say 'bout the Mexican army. We must take this right ter Captain Walker," and away they went, leaving a most bitter enemy behind them.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER ENCOUNTER.

Hank Dalton could not read Spanish very well, and so on his return he gave the letter to Captain Walker, who read it attentively.

"This letter is of importance," said he. "Lieutenant Dalton, ride directly to headquarters and place it in General Taylor's hands."

"Away I go, cap," said he, saluting.

"Tell him all particulars about it."

"All, cap?" asked Dalton, while a big, good-natured grin overspread his features.

"Certainly all; why not?"

"Waal, cap, yer see we was out on a little sort of a gal scrape for Bax here, an'——"

"I'll tell yer how 'twas, cap," said Baxter.

"Be quick, then."

Baxter then related the circumstances.

"That's all right. Simply report that you were coming from the house; that you were attacked by ruffians, and one of them dropped this letter. Now ride without further delay and deliver it."

"All right," and away he went.

"Baxter, return to your post, and allow no one inside of the lines without a pass from headquarters. Go at once."

"Wonder what in thunder's up now?" he muttered as he turned away.

Captain Walker at once issued like orders to the guard in various portions of the camp, and seeing everything in proper shape, he waited for any command that might come from General Taylor.

But he had not long to wait.

The letter, as before stated, was written by Canales to Muelo, and showed that there was a movement on foot on his part to ride upon Matamoras with about one thousand desperate rancheros, who were to make a sudden dash, inflict all the damage possible upon the little garrison then under Walker, and take all the plunder that could be carried away, and then be off again into the interior before a sufficient number of the enemy could be brought against them to endanger their raid.

In a postscript Canales said:

"Spoils or patriotism do not actuate me so much as a thirst for revenge. I shall most likely receive another chance to meet that North American cur who insulted me publicly at the house of Senor Gabella. Be ready with your followers to second me."

General Taylor understood the matter instantly, and at once prepared for it by sending General Worth over with his division, with instructions to reinforce Captain Walker, and enable him to meet Canales.

But there was no bustle or show, that being purposely avoided, so as not to inform the friends of Canales that his plot had been discovered. On the contrary, the troops were moved in small bodies and located in different places about the city, while General Worth and Captain Walker agreed upon a plan of operations, the execution of which was to be left to the latter, and he was only too anxious for the opportunity of again meeting his personal enemy and protecting the better class of the inhabitants of Matamoras.

And the bold Texan Rangers were delighted at the prospect of a little activity, for since the last battle they had done nothing but loaf and enjoy life as it is to be enjoyed in Mexico.

Baxter was again returned to his regiment, a portion of which was to take part in the coming contest.

"Darn my picter, I don't like this," said he.

"Why not?" asked some of his comrades.

"'Cos I want to ride a mule or a hoss, an' sail in heavy with Cap'n Walker an' his boys," said he.

"Oh, I guess you'll have it warm enough with us uns," said the other, laughing.

"No, sir—boss. I know what Walker 'll do. He'll do all the greaser killin' himself, and all we shall hev tu du is guard duty an' hurraying."

Scouts were sent out in the direction of where Canales was supposed to be, and the next day they reported that he was within ten miles of the city, and that it was his intention to dash upon it early the following morning.

Everything was arranged to give him a warm reception, although his friends in the city knew nothing of it, so quietly had things been managed.

Walker and his Rangers had been posted about a mile from the city, on the Maleo road, but completely hidden by some woods about half a mile from the turnpike. Half a mile nearer to the city about five hundred infantry, under Colonel Davis, were concealed in an old tannery.

It was just about daybreak when Canales appeared at the head of fully five hundred mounted rancheros, the roughest set of people in Mexico, and rode proudly along until he had got past the woods where Walker and his Rangers were concealed.

"To saddle!" said he calmly.

The men had been anxiously waiting for this order for quite a while, and it was obeyed with alacrity.

"See that every piece is loaded. Ride cautiously until you get the word to charge, and then show your metal. Forward!" said Walker.

(*Continued on page* 20.)

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CHOICE READING MATTER.

The Italian child is never allowed to rub its eyes. If it burst into tears it is not repressed, but allowed to have the cry out. This, it is claimed, beautifies the eyes, and makes them clear, while rubbing the eyes injures them in many ways.

Bahrien, on the Persian Gulf, is said to be one of the hottest places on earth. For six consecutive weeks there the thermometer has been known to stay above 100 in the shade. It varies the monotony, however, by occasional climbs to 125 degrees or so. There is no rain-fall and no wells exist, for attempts to reach water even at a depth of 500 feet have failed.

The strange custom of salting new-born babies is still practiced in certain regions of Europe and Asia. The method varies with the differing nationalities of the peoples employing it. The Armenians cover the entire skin of the infant with very fine salt. This is left on the baby for three hours or more, when it is washed off with warm water. The mothers imagine that this practice brings health and strength to their offspring, and serves as well to keep away evil spirits.

Paper is entering into important arts of Europe. The most novel use of it is in the manufacture of false teeth by the Germans, who say of the product that it is keeping its color well and is decidedly stronger than the porcelain imitation. When the wine makers of Greece found the lumber too costly with which to make wine casks the manufacturers substituted paper pulp and have found it most satisfactory.

The proposed dimensions of the big ship which is being built for the Hamburg American Company have more than once been enlarged, until it is now finally settled that she will be 879.3 feet long over all, 95.2 feet broad, and 64 feet deep. The Shipping World, of England, states that she is to be propelled exclusively by turbines at a speed of 22 knots. These dimensions slightly exceed those of the White Star liners "Olympic" and "Titanic."

The Buddhists regard with veneration the burning of a human body after death. They believe that by this process its material parts are restored to the higher elements; whereas burial, or the abandonment of the body, as a prey to animal life, inspires a peculiar horror, since, according to their belief, the body must then return to the earth and pass through countless forms of the lower orders of creation before it can again be fitted for the occupation of a human soul.

Experiments [illegible] the possibility that shields may once more become an important part of the equipment of an army. Steel shields three milimetres in thickness and about 150 square inches in area have been devised, which afford complete protection against bullets fired from the service rifle at a range of four hundred yards. The small size of the shield, which weighs only seven pounds, requires that the soldier shall lie prone on the ground in order to be sheltered. Each shield has a loophole for the rifle and studs at the sides, so that a series of them can be linked into a continuous screen. The idea is that by the use of such shields the necessity of digging trenches may often be avoided.

Travelers in the celebrated Death Valley of California have described the wonderful contortions of the sand-pillars that whirlwinds sometimes send spinning across the hot plain. Even more remarkable are the "dust devils" frequently seen in the valley of the White Nile. Sometimes two of these whirling columns, gyrating in opposite directions, meet, and it is said, if they be well matched, the collision stops them and a struggle ensues as to which way they shall twist. Gradually one gains the mastery, and the two combined begin to gyrate alike and then rush on together. Some of these whirls will, it is claimed, strip the clothes from an Arab's back, or twist a goat round and round like a top.

RIB TICKLERS.

"How is it that your hens are so prolific?" "I feed them on layer cake."

Jiggs—I tell you, that new landlord of mine is a pretty square fellow. Biggs—So's mine; but he's always 'round on rent day.

Aunt Anna asked her little nephew what he would like to give his cousin for his birthday. "I know," he answered, "but I ain't big enough."

Little Eleanor, who was very fond of chickens, stood crying over a dead rooster. Thinking that something good ought to be said, she remarked between her sobs: "He was always so glad when one of the hens laid an egg."

"John, did you take the note to Mr. Jones?" "Yes, but I don't think he can read it." "Why so, John?" "Because he is blind, sir. While I was in the room he axed me twice where my hat wur, and it wur on my head all the time."

The woman was lightly clad and evidently not too well off. "Have you no heart?" she asked. "None." The man's answer was gruff, almost harsh. "None whatever?" "Absolutely none." "Then I guess you may give me a pound of liver."

The Irish foreman of a Western factory had trouble with a Swedish employe because of the latter's stupidity. Finally he discharged the Swede, but he was too good natured to refuse him a letter of recommendation. Being something of a diplomatist, the Celt couched the letter in the following terms: "This man has worked for me for one week, and I am satisfied."

TONS OF TREASURE

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

A reporter of the Helena (Montana) Independent had a conversation with one of a party of three men who have spent the past summer in searching for the "Lost Cabin," about which there was so much discussion in this territory several years ago. It was built by a party of four men, who in 1863 made a wonderful discovery of gold at a point supposed to be somewhere near the line between Montana and Wyoming. In less than a week after discovery was made a party of hostile Indians made a descent on the discoverers and killed all but one of them. The surviver, a man named Thompson, made his appearance in Alder Gulch, and set the camp on fire with the tale of the wonderful discovery which he and his companions had made. The discovery was said to consist of a ledge of quartz several feet in width, with streaks of pure gold running through it averaging from one to seven inches wide. The story was marvelous, and if the public pulse had not at that time been in a feverish condition on account of the vast quantities of the precious metal then being taken out weekly from the placers of Alder Gulch its truth might have been questioned. But under the circumstances no one thought of doubting it for an instant, especially when Thompson exhibited several ragged chunks of gold that had the appearance of having been broken from a mass of glittering metal, and this, Thompson asserted, was the case. The camp went wild. A hundred men stood ready and anxious to follow Thompson to the spot if he would lead them. But Thompson suddenly disappeared, and afterwards news came of his death in the Big Horn country.

"I had been in California several years," said the late searcher, "when in company with a friend, I visited the State Lunatic Asylum. This was in the winter. While going through the asylum, the warden called our attention to a peculiar case in his charge. It was a man who occupied all his time in drawing rough diagrams or maps on the walls of his cell. These drawings were all alike, and the walls and floor of his cell were covered with them. They were of some mountainous country, with a river running through it from the south and a smaller stream putting into the river from the east in about the center of the map. From the point of junction of these two streams a line was drawn due south to a peak, marked 'three miles,' and thence it continued in a zigzag line a southerly direction, with the length of each straight line marked. At the extreme end of the line a circle was drawn with a cross in the center. As soon as I looked at the crazy map-maker I recognized him. It was Thompson. I was subsequently told that after going from Montana to California, he had lost all his money, and then was taken with a fever. He was adjudged insane, and sent to the asylum, where I found him. He had been there three years.

"We stepped into the cell. I examined the maps on the wall, and asked Thompson about them. He seemed willing enough to talk about other matters—in a disjointed manner, however—but concerning his map he would not say a word.

"On finding that the man was Thompson, it immediately occurred to me that the map was intended to show the point at which the Lost Cabin and the wonderful deposit of gold were located, and the questions which I asked were propounded with a view of getting a clew. After questioning him unsuccessfully for some time, I put my finger on the circle in the map, and asked him:

"'Is this gold?'

"His answer was to spring at me in wild rage. I knew from this that I had guessed his secret.

"We all withdrew from the cell, and at the first opportunity I had an interview with one of the physicians of the institution, and told him what I knew about Thompson. I also told him that there was very little doubt of the existence of the deposit of gold, and that Thompson could lead us to it.

"The physician had previously informed me that the patient was sometimes to all purposes perfectly sane for weeks, and I now suggested that the next time one of those lucid intervals occurred we should see what we could do with him. The doctor agreed.

"In about two weeks a note was sent to my hotel informing me that Thompson had entered upon one of his lucid spells. I immediately went up to the asylum.

"In company with the doctor, I entered Thompson's cell and entered into conversation with him. His talk was quite rational, and in the course of half an hour's interview he appealed to me to get him out of the asylum.

"This was our chance.

"The doctor immediately offered to free him from the asylum if he would show us the way to that point, indicating it with his finger on the map. Thompson hesitated a moment, but presently consented.

"This was all we wanted.

"There was no difficulty in getting him out of the asylum. The doctor certified he was cured, and a discharge soon followed. We immediately started for Montana, whence we intended to proceed to the Big Horn Mountains for the purpose of hunting for the treasure. We reached Dillon on the 3d of last June, and took the stage to Virginia City. There we outfitted, ostensibly for the National Park, and continued on our journey. In a few days we found ourselves in the park, and well on our way to the Big Horn Mountains, in which Thompson said the gold mine was located. In three more days we reached the Big Horn River, and traveled up it to the mouth. This was on the 15th of June.

"Thompson had up to this time acted as naturally as any of us (in addition to the doctor and myself, we had brought along one of the asylum attendants). Thompson said that we would be able to reach the gold deposit the next day, and we were all wild with excitement. We camped on the night of the 15th in a wild place a few miles from the river. Aside from Thompson we were all very tired, and slept soundly. When we arose in the morning, Thompson was gone. The excitement had evidently brought on a spasm of insanity, and he had got up during the night and wandered off into the mountains. We hunted for him three days, and finally found him lying bruised and dead, at the foot of a cliff fully a thousand feet high. In his delirium he had plunged over it to certain death—probably the night that he fled from camp. We buried him where we found him, and as a search for the treasure would be hopeless without his assistance, we turned back. The doctor and his man I left at Miles City, whence they probably had gone East. As for myself, I made no further search for the Lost Cabin."

WHAT CLOCK JONES DID.

That winter we were in camp on Panther Creek was one never to be forgotten, even by a miner who had blasted rocks in the hills and worked knee-deep in the cold waters of the valleys. No one was making a fair living, to say nothing of adding to the store which was to some day carry the possessor back to the States and to wife and children.

It was not enough that times were hard, the weather bad,

and a good share of the men sick, but the blacklegs came down from Thunder Bend and up from Aunt Sally's Town, and made themselves quite at home among us. They were well stocked with whisky and gambling devices, and more than one of our men who had dug and delved for months to get a few dollars ahead saw it pass into the hands of these hyenas.

When Richard Smith lost his dust and raised a kick, one of the gamblers put a knife into him to settle the argument. That action stirred up the town and in the row that followed four or five men were killed and as many more wounded. After this affair the town was pretty quiet for a fortnight, and then occurred the incident I set out to relate.

One of the best-natured men in camp was a man from Connecticut, generally known by the name of Clock Jones. When he left 'Frisco for the diggings, he carried with him an old-fashioned family clock; and for a year or two he and the clock were "pards" and traveled in company, and were never out of sight of each other. In this way he came to be known by the front name of "Clock," and if the title did not please him no one ever heard him object to it.

At some time in the past Clock Jones had been a drunkard. Perhaps the fears and prayers of a loving wife had wrought his rescue. He had braced against the awful vice, and none of us had ever known him to taste the stuff.

Well, it might have been curiosity that one day led the man to enter the shanty of the worst blackleg of all. If not that, then he was drawn there, as fate has drawn her victims here and there before. He was a man who would not touch cards, and as I said before, we had never seen him taste liquor. And yet within half an hour after he had entered that den he was whooping drunk, and being plucked of his money. Several of his friends made efforts to get him out of the clutches of the blacklegs, but their kind words were answered by threats and curses. The man had changed from a quiet, God-fearing miner to a howling, reckless, brawling demon in thirty minutes. One sip of whisky had created a craving for drink, and dram had followed dram with frightful avidity.

We couldn't let him go on in that way, and finally a miner named Williams was prevailed upon to make another effort. We selected this man because at home he was a neighbor of Jones, and because he, too, had saved up a snug little sum, and would go home in the spring. The two men, after a hard day's work, had sat together by the cheerful fire of evenings and anticipated their return home. They had planned how they would reach home in the evening, still wearing their old clothes and long beards and rough looks, and after an absence of seven years no one would know them as they walked the streets of the village. They would quietly approach their own homes, and their knock would be answered by the wives who had waited and hoped and lived by hoping. He would speak to her as a stranger, and he would be on the point of turning away when something in voice or gesture would tell her that the long-gone husband was home at last.

So they had planned, and neither had been ashamed of the tears which welled up to his eyes at the recollections of home.

We sought out Williams and entreated him to interfere to save his friend, and he walked straight to the gambler's cabin. Jones had lost every dollar of his money and was fighting drunk.

"Come, Clock—come away," coaxed Williams.

"I won't! I want more whisky and a chance to win my money back!" shouted Jones.

"For your wife's sake, come away," entreated Williams.

"I tell you I won't, and if you don't go away I'll kill you!" yelled Jones, as he flourished his shooter around.

Williams walked over and laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and whispered:

"Come, old neighbor—remember wife and children."

"Hang wife and children, and you, too!" was the fierce exclamation from the maddened man, and with that he fired to kill.

The bullet did not kill. Indeed, it did not hit Williams at all, but the flame of the powder blinded him in a flash and forever. He carried his hands to his face, stepped back a pace or two, and I can never forget how his voice went out to every heart as he cried out:

"Oh, man, you have blinded me, and I shall never see wife and children again!"

The demon fled from Clock Jones's heart as that wail reached it. In a moment he was pale as death and as sober as at any hour in his life. Slowly, as the darkness of his soul was lighted up by the return of reason, he comprehended what he had done. He looked from face to face, saw the hand resting on each countenance. Then he took poor Williams's hands down from his face, kissed him on his cheek, and stepped back and blew his own brains out before a hand could be raised to prevent him.

MISSING LINKS IN NEW GUINEA.

"Across from our tropical State of Queensland," remarked the Australian, "is the most mysterious of the unexplored corners of the earth, the Island of New Guinea. Queer things happen there and there are still queerer things to be seen.

"I used to spend nearly all my vacations cruising on the New Guinea Coast, and I didn't encounter any of the things that travel books describe. But I did run up against a tribe of swamp-dwellers that came closer to supplying the missing link than any other human beings I have ever heard or read of.

"They call themselves the Ahgaiambo, and have lived in the marsh country of the southeastern portion of the island for a period that goes back beyond native tradition. They use log canoes, which they propel through the miry water with poles, but for getting from one place to another depend mostly upon their ability as swimmers. It's a sight to see them take a dive off some eminence and glide through the water like eels, passing with graceful curves through beds of reeds or over floating masses of vegetable matter, while the sunlight sparkles on their smooth brown bodies.

"I induced a man and a woman to allow me to measure them and take their photographs. Both were well developed from the hips upward, with broad shoulders, thick necks, and long and powerful arms. Their legs, however, were remarkably slight. At first this puzzled me, as it seemed that the exercise of swimming should have brought all the muscles of the body into play. Afterward I discovered that the Ahgaiambo use their legs very little in the water. They keep their feet together, making a sort of rudder of the lower limbs, and do all the work with their arms. This emphasizes their resemblance to eels, when in the water, and accounts for the peculiarly graceful manner in which they glide along.

"The man I examined had several folds of thick skin or muscle across the loins, which concealed the outline of his body. Viewed sideways, his resemblance to an ape was striking. One of the most surprising things about him was that, although almost exactly the same height as one of my Papuan boatmen, his hips were six inches nearer the ground.

"The woman was more slightly formed than her mate of the marshes. Her legs were like spindles, her feet were flat, and her toes stood out rigidly as though they possessed no joints. Her dress was a very short skirt of native cloth.

"As far as I know, the Ahgaiambo are not to be met with outside of this swamp country of New Guinea, and have never been studied by ethnologists."

(*Continued from page* 16.)

Scarcely had they gained the road before Davis opened on the sailors with his rifles, and this caused a halt, and something of a panic.

Canales saw that he had been discovered, but thinking that it was only a detached camp of the Americans, he ordered a charge upon the old building in which they had taken shelter.

But the unerring rifles of the First Mississippi sent many a Greaser tumbling out of his saddle.

A large number of citizens had by this time arrived near the scene of action.

Canales led the charge in person, but in spite of his bravery his men recoiled, and he finally ordered a retreat, hoping he might avoid the riflemen altogether, and dash past them by taking another road further to the left.

But scarcely had his men reached a turn in the road which screened them from the murderous rifles, when Walker at the head of his Rangers swept down upon them like an avalanche, firing as they came on, and doing good execution.

In an instant Canales saw that he had been betrayed, and that he was probably in a trap, out of which nothing but the most desperate fighting would take him. So he spurred his horse to the front, and with drawn sword sought to rally his demoralized troops.

But he was too late, for already the rangers were upon him with revolvers in one hand and their huge broadswords in the other, and holding their bridles in their teeth, were carrying havoc among the Mexicans, and sending their riderless horses galloping madly over the adjacent fields.

Shouting and foaming in his mad desperation, Canales singled out Walker, and rode for him at the top of his speed.

Walker was aware of and eager for the meeting.

Like two infuriated devils did they meet, broadsword to broadsword, which flashed lightning as they clashed together.

Each reined his steed, and turning, rode back again for another encounter.

Four times did they ride upon each other in this desperate way, when just as Walker was about to return for another, a small bullet shattered the fore leg of his horse, and he fell to the ground, rolling his rider in such a way as to extricate himself from the saddle.

"Ha, now I have you!" shouted Canales, poising his sword and riding upon him.

At that instant a Mexican girl threw herself from the horse she had been riding, and shielded Walker's body with her own.

"Hold, Canales!" said she.

"Never," he hissed, wheeling his horse so as to reach Walker on the other side. "If I did not wish to kill him before, I do now."

"Not much, I guess," said Hank Davis, driving his horse [illegible] and his rifle-butt full into Canales' face, and his horse over in a confused heap. "Guess yer better take a prisoner, cap," he added, turning and presenting his rifle to his head.

"I surrender," said Canales, throwing down his sword.

"Waal, that saves yer bacon, 'cordin' to war; but if I had my way, I'd bore yer so full o' holes that yer innards'd all leak out. Here, this way," he added, calling to three or four of the Rangers who were about giving chase to a dozen rancheros as they started to escape through the woods. "Are you hurt, cap?"

"Not much, I guess, if I could only get out from under my horse, poor fellow."

"We'll soon fix that. Here, boys, two on yer scoop in this cuss, an' the rest help the captain."

"That's all right, lieutenant. Follow up the enemy, and I'll be with you in a moment."

"Good enough, cap," said the brave fellow, as he galloped away.

Captain Walker was soon released and on his feet again, greatly to the delight of Bianca Gabella, for she it was who had followed her lover and attempted to save his life.

"Thanks, Bianca. You came like an angel," said he. "I haven't time to half thank you, but will do so after we have routed these robbers. Let me help you to your horse again. Be careful, and farewell," said he, kissing her hand and helping her to her saddle, after which he mounted a fresh horse, and rode headlong into the fight again.

CHAPTER XII.

ONWARD TO MONTEREY.

Various movements on the part of our army, and waiting for negotiations and instructions from Washington, caused a long delay, and it was not until the 1st of September that further parley between the two governments failed, and General Taylor was ordered to move upon Monterey.

The defense of this important place was intrusted to General Ampudia. The garrison was large, and the works of sufficient strength to be deemed impregnable.

Ampudia issued a most bombastic address, in which he promised to wipe from the face of the sacred soil of Mexico every American who now had the audacity to be marching towards Monterey, and the city was at once placed in a state of siege.

Captains Walker and McCulloch had several sharp skirmishes on the route, but they invariably beat off, killed or captured any presumptuous detachment of the enemy who dared to make a stand.

On the 18th of September General Taylor halted his army at Walnut Springs, three miles from Monterey, and prepared for one of the most heroic and remarkable sieges which it has ever fallen to the lot of the historian to record.

The various divisions were assigned to camping ground, and with the utmost coolness and calm deliberation did each prepare for the work before them.

The city of Monterey is one of the most beautiful in Mexico, if not in the world. A pen picture can scarcely do it justice; to do so, nothing less than an actual view of it can show its beauties.

It is nestled under the mountain (King's Mountain) at whose base it rambles. It is at the commencement of the Sierra Madre range, one of the loftiest in Mexico.

It is about eight hundred miles from the City of Mexico. The San Juan river runs below the city, while on the opposite side there is an extensive plain on which grow luxuriant crops of maize, sugar cane, groves of apples, peach, orange and citron trees.

The first movement on the part of the Mexicans was made soon after we went into camp. A detachment of the enemy's lances were observed approaching, and General Taylor ordered Captain Walker to charge them.

He did so, when they suddenly wheeled about and returned to the city. Instead of pursuing them, however, Walker ordered a halt, and the object of the movement was soon apparent. The guns of the citadel suddenly opened with twelve-pound shot, which, had Walker and his Rangers been within range, as Ampudia calculated they would be, would have committed fearful havoc among them.

This foresight on the part of Walker was highly commended by Taylor, who, in the meantime, with Major Mansfield and a party of engineers, had been making a thorough examination of the enemy's works.

Night closed in without further demonstration from the Mexicans, and a happier, more jolly army than ours could never have been seen. From camp to camp, and from mess to mess words of congratulation flew, and wild songs of fun, pathetic ones, and those descriptive of daring deeds resounded along the line until late at night.

Even the humblest soldier could see the work before them, but every heart was nerved and every arm ready to meet the enemy anywhere.

The spirit of sport, good fellowship and chivalry was abroad in our little army.

Hank Dalton, Elam W. Baxter, and several other kindred spirits were assembled in Dalton's tent, and were the wildest and loudest in their revelry. Serious work was at length before them, and this, if nothing else, would have made them happy even to boisterousness.

"Cross-buttock me with a mule if things aren't gittin' to be just hunky," said Baxter, as he lifted Hank's flask to his lips.

"Yas, everything's hunky when you git yer sucker coupled with somebody's whisky-flask," said Dalton, half serious—half in earnest.

"Hank, you'd be right if you's goin' to be hung, I swar," said he, half in fun also.

"Waal, I wouldn't like to be hung ter yer if the only nodder I had war whisky," retorted Hank, at which a loud laugh arose from the mess.

"Wonder how long afore those Greasers 'll du somethin'?" asked one of the company.

"Hang me if I know. But you may bet yer butes that ole Zack won't wait for 'em long afore he tickles the ribs of this ere royal city," said Hank.

"And," said one of the mess, rising to his feet and waving his cap:

"The star spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
Over Monterey and many a grave."

This was sung with only that zest which soldiers in camp can give to such a grand old song, and before they had finished the whole encampment—the whole army, had caught up the glorious hymn, and as it billowed out upon the air and reached the ramparts of Monterey, what a chill it must have sent to many a presumptuous Mexican's heart, who had, perhaps, dared to dream of crushing forever the bold little army which lay beneath them.

Hardly had they finished singing, when an orderly appeared before the tent, and called for Baxter.

"Right here on hand every time, you bet," said he, coming out and saluting.

"Be good enough to report to General Taylor at once," said the orderly, riding away.

"Good enough. Tell the ole hoss that I'm his chipmunk for anything an' forever!" he yelled after the officer.

"What is it, Bax?" asked Hank Dalton, coming out.

"The boss has sent for me."

"What! Taylor?"

"Sure pop."

"Bully for you!" said several.

"Waal, Bax, I sorter reckon as how that means biz," said Dalton.

"An' that's what'll cure my itch, Hank."

"Maybe as how it will. Give us yer hand, an' if we don't meet ag'in, I'll allus take my 'solemn' that yer died game."

"Good 'nough. Shake," said he, taking the hand of the stalwart Texan, after which he shook hands with other members of the company, and at once set out for the headquarters of General Taylor.

Arriving there, he at once reported, and in a few minutes was admitted to his presence.

He found him in a very humble tent, engaged in writing by the light of a very poor candle.

He never moved or looked up until he had finished his letter, and Baxter stood there all the while, anxious.

Finally, when he had finished writing, he passed the letter over to an adjutant to seal and direct, and then looked up at Baxter.

"Baxter!"

"Gineral!" said the Yankee, saluting.

"I am glad to see you. Be seated."

"Thankee. Glad tu see you, gineral. Hope yer fust-class; I du, by gracious."

"Thank you. I want you for dangerous work, Baxter."

"Bully for you, gineral! I'm yer crowbar all the time."

The rough old general laughed in spite of himself.

"Well, the work I have for you might christen you a crowbar very appropriately. I want you to disguise yourself somehow, and work your way into Monterey, and there find out all you can about the garrison—how many men they have got at each work, and, in short, all you can about everything."

"As I said before, gineral, I'm yer crowbar."

"Well, what disguise will you adopt?"

"I'll have tu be Mexican," said Baxter thoughtfully.

"Certainly. But do you speak Spanish?"

"Fust-class, gineral."

"So much the better."

"I've kited all over this yer country, fust an' last, an' if I only had a Mexican peasant's toggery, I could pass for a thoroughbred Greaser."

"Good! We must have such a dress," said Taylor, turn-

ing to one of his adjutants and conversing with him for a moment in an undertone.

"General, there is a Mexican inside of the lines now, selling fruit, whose dress will answer, I think."

"Bring him in at once."

The adjutant saluted and was gone.

"Gineral, how'd we know that this ere fruit peddler arn't a spy?" said Baxter, who at once suspected that something might be wrong, from the fact of his resolving to adopt that very same disguise.

"Well, there is a bare possibility of his being one. However, we will see when he comes in."

Just then the adjutant returned, bringing in a common Mexican ranchero.

Both Taylor and Baxter scrutinized him closely.

"Gineral, I'll bet my head agin' a cooky that this ere chap aren't on the square," said Baxter, in a whisper.

"Who are you?" demanded Taylor, sternly.

The Mexican attempted to reply in Spanish.

"Stop! Give it to me in English or I'll have you shot."

"A poor ranchero, senor Americano, selling fruit."

"Have you a pass?"

"Si, senor," said he, producing it.

Taylor inspected it carefully.

"Very well, if you are what you say you are, you can have no objection to exchanging dresses with this gentleman here. Strip!"

The Mexican hesitated.

"Strip, or I'll have you stripped," thundered Taylor.

"Unharness yer meat darned quick if yer don't want ter have it made leaky," said Baxter.

The Mexican glanced from one to another, but finding nothing but stern resolution on the face of General Taylor, he began to undress.

"That's jist what yer want ter du, Mr. Greaser," said Baxter, commencing himself to undress.

The Mexican muttered something in Spanish, but went on with his disrobing.

Taylor watched him closely and did not fail to note the difference between the soft olive skin as it appeared after his clothes had been removed, and the hard, bronzed face and hands which were displayed before undressing.

Baxter got into the Mexican's garb as fast as he got out of it, and the Mexican was forced into his.

"Now bring me soap and water," said Taylor, and in a few minutes they were forthcoming, greatly to the consternation of the ranchero.

"Baxter, you see the color you want on your face and hands," said he, aside to the spy.

"I'll git it, gineral."

"'Tis well. Now wash this fellow's face and hands and let me see whether he looks the same."

"It won't du him any hurt, anyway, gineral," said Baxter.

In spite of some resistance and many protests, three or four orderlies seized the Mexican and gave his face a good washing. There was a decided change in his appearance. The dark, sun-brown had given place to an olive tint that was almost as delicate as that of a lady, and the dirt once removed from his hands showed that they did not belong to a farmer, but most likely to a person of the better class.

"You are a ranchero, are you?" said Taylor, with a sneer.

"Si, senor."

"Indeed! Well, I'll keep you until to-morrow, and then have you shot, unless you can prove who you are. Away with him, under guard."

The order was instantly obeyed, and in spite of his protests the Mexican was taken away, a prisoner.

"Sarves yu right, Mr. Greaser. But I may be caught in the same snap," said Baxter.

"True, you may. But take nothing with you that will give you away."

"Bet yer butes I won't, gineral. But whar's the chap's animal?"

"Here at hand." And they both went out to inspect it.

It was a little donkey and a two-wheeled cart. There were various kinds of fruit in the cart, a portion of which he had sold before being apprehended.

"This'll du for me, gineral," said Baxter.

"Do you think so?"

"I du, by gosh. Now see't I'm passed outside of the lines, an' give me a special word that will get me back any time."

In a few moments the preliminaries were all arranged, and Baxter set off toward Monterey with his donkey-cart and load of fruit, followed by the good wishes of all who knew of the dangerous mission he was going on. Once outside, he was lost to all but himself, although he halted just outside of our lines to wait for morning to come.

Early the next morning he was on his way, having, in the meantime, provided himself with all he wanted.

After traversing quite a distance between the lines, Baxter was challenged by a Mexican sentry; but having the pass which had been taken from the Mexican spy, he was passed into Monterey without question; and never did a genuine Mexican appear more like the genuine article than did Elam W. Baxter.

With his eyes and ears wide open, and yet being, to all appearances, a simple fruit-vender, he made his way to the principal street, called "Calle de Monterey," and which runs from the bishop's palace, through the middle of the city, to the plaza, of which it forms the west side.

Through this street, selling his fruit by the way, he went, and before noon had made the circuit of the city, and had obtained pretty accurate knowledge regarding the defenses and the number of men in each, just as Taylor had instructed him.

It was after he had obtained all this information and was returning through Calle de Monterey, on his way back to the American lines, that he was approached by a Mexican citizen, who at once claimed to be the owner of the donkey and cart.

Here was a complication which Baxter had not provided for; but his cheek was good in almost any emergency, and he at once applied it.

So he buzzed the Mexican, and showed, by his pass, that he was a countryman—a ranchero, come in to sell fruit to the soldiers.

But the Mexican was tenacious, for he knew his property; and knowing, too, that it had been lent to a Mexican

spy, he at once suspected treachery, and called loudly for the officer of the guard.

"Rot blast yer picter; take that!" said Baxter, knocking the Mexican sprawling.

It was a good blow, and well put in, but two or three soldiers came running up to answer the Mexican's cry, and see what it all meant. As yet the owner of the donkey had not recovered.

"This fellow attempted to rob me," said he, in good Spanish, "and I flopped him over; was I right?" he added, offering a handful of oranges to the soldiers.

"To be sure you was," said they.

"Thanks," and Baxter drove rapidly away.

The soldiers ate the oranges, and regarded the stunned Mexican who still lay upon the ground before them. But presently he revived.

They ridiculed him, however, and told him to move along, and when he attempted to explain to them, they placed the bayonets of their guns behind him, and ran him out of their precinct.

But fully believing that mischief was afoot, the Mexican made his way to the headquarters of Ampudia, and told his story.

General Ampudia understood it at once. He had employed this man's donkey and cart to equip one of his favorite officers, who had undertaken to enter the American lines for the purpose of learning all he could regarding the enemy, and if the story this man told was true, not only was it probable that his officer had fallen into the hands of General Taylor, but in adopting the same disguise, another spy had made his way into the city of Monterey, and without doubt had learned all he had been sent to find out.

And so General Ampudia at once called around him some trusty men and officers, and giving a description of the supposed American spy, he bade them take him at all hazards, dead or alive.

Twenty horsemen instantly rode away in different directions, each eager to win the glory attending the capture of so important a personage on the eve of battle.

Baxter, in the meantime, having secured all the information he wanted, made direct for the American lines, but scarcely had he presented his pass (the same on which he had entered, and on which the Mexican had left Monterey, and been allowed to pass), than a dozen horsemen dashed around an angle in the road and called upon the sentry to stop him.

"Beeswax tu bake!" said Baxter, "it's luck, fight, or good breedin', so here goes," saying which he whipped out his knife, and in an instant cut the donkey free from the cart and threw himself astride of him. "Now go it, long ears!"

With a well-applied whip he managed to get the lazy donkey into a gallop, but the Mexican lancers were fast overtaking him, as he made but half their headway toward the American lines.

As luck would have it, Captain Walker and his men were stationed nearest to the point he was approaching, and knowing that Baxter might be expected at any moment, he had been prepared all day to render him assistance should he need it.

And need it he did just now. The fierce Mexican lancers, bent upon capturing him at all hazards, were close upon him now, and Walker leaped into his saddle and called a few of his men to follow him.

"I think that is Baxter whom they are chasing. Quick, follow me!"

The pursuing Mexicans were swooping down upon the American spy like so many eagles upon their defenseless prey, and scarcely had they reached midway between the American and Mexican line, when one of the foremost riders threw a lasso over Baxter's head and pulled him from the donkey with the utmost ease.

In an instant more Walker and his men and the Mexicans dashed upon the scene, and a spirited fight at once resulted, Baxter all the while lying prone upon the ground, held in the grasp of the cutting lasso, and liable to be trampled to death by the horses, who were plunging madly around him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF A MEMORABLE SIEGE.

The fight between Captain Walker with a small detachment of his Rangers and the Mexicans who had pursued Elam W. Baxter out of the city of Monterey, and who were on the point of capturing him for a spy, was of short duration. One of the Mexicans was killed, two wounded and made prisoners, and the others escaped back to the city.

Walker at once turned to Baxter, who still lay on the ground, where the lasso of the Mexican had thrown him from his donkey. He was bruised and bleeding from several wounds, but not hurt seriously.

"Is that you, Baxter?" he asked, riding up to where he lay.

"I guess so, cap'n; but cut this here lasso, for it is cuttin' me most alfiredly," said he.

Walker got down from his horse, cut the lasso and assisted him to his feet.

"Goldurn my buttons if ever I was got on a string like that afore," he muttered.

"Are you hurt much?"

"Waal, I don't zactly think I'm trench-meat yet, but I guess it's 'bout all I want ter day, cap'n."

"Get up here with me. My horse is strong enough to carry us both."

"Wonder where my donkey is?"

"Over there in the corn-field. Tom, bring in that donkey!" called Walker to one of his men.

"Guess I'll adopt that ere little cuss.—Now, go it for headquarters, licketysplit," he added, and away they rode across a maize field in the direction of Taylor's headquarters.

The old general congratulated Baxter on his escape, and the information which he brought was the very kind he needed to enable him to proceed understandingly with the giant task he had set himself upon—the capture of the superbly fortified city of Monterey.

This information which he brought not only convicted the Mexican spy, but convinced Taylor that the city would have to be attacked on both front and rear, and so take

two chances of capturing it, besides keeping the enemy broken and more busy in defending against two armies instead of one.

The march was taken up, but it soon became evident that the Mexicans were determined to dispute the passage, and Walker was ordered to join Captain McCulloch in the advance.

They had not proceeded more than two miles when, on coming to a turn in the road, they came upon the enemy to the number of fifteen hundred, drawn up in line of battle and all ready to receive them.

Captain Walker at once ordered his men to deploy to the right and dismount. He was supported by Duncan's battery and the light companies of Scott and Smith.

The enemy at once opened fire, in which they were joined by the battery on Independence Hill. The Rangers answered by a rapid fire from their trusty rifles, every shot from which meant a soldier's life.

The Mexicans then prepared to charge, and as Walker and a company of Rangers separated from the other companies, he was obliged to receive the entire shock. Then ensued a scene which for rapidity of movement and individual daring was never surpassed in any battle in the world.

Then it was the hardest part of the struggle took place. Dalton's horse had been shot under him, and he himself had received two wounds, yet on foot, with his huge broadsword, he defended himself against three of the enemy, one of whom he killed, while the other two were pickled by his men.

In this strait Walker led the remainder of his Rangers to the rescue, and soon forced his way to where they were. But what life there was left in the Mexicans now was directed upon these terrible Texans, and a lively fight they gave them, outnumbering them as they did ten to one.

But Walker and his men were equal to the emergency, although there was no hope of holding their own against such fearful odds. They literally hewed their way out of the enemy's center, and rejoined the remainder of the detachment with the loss of only one man.

After the action General Worth moved his command along the Saltillo road and took up a strong position, and at once commenced the siege, while Duncan's battery kept up an artillery duel with the cannon posted on Independence Hill.

As soon as everything was in shape, Walker visited his wounded Rangers, among whom was his lieutenant, Hank Dalton.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE TIDE OF BATTLE.

General Worth lost but little time in getting his army into position.

When all was ready he sent for Captain Walker.

"I have named you the bravest of the brave. I now you are ambitious. I must take Federation Hill. You will take command of one of the storming parties. I rely upon you," said the bluff soldier.

"You may do so, general," said Walker, modestly.

"I know it. Assume command and stand ready for orders."

"I hasten to obey, general," and saluting, the young officer rode away to his command.

A portion of this new and temporary command was composed of the Texan Rangers, dismounted, and the others were made up from various regiments, all being picked men, artillery, cavalry and militia.

When all was in readiness, General Worth rode among the men, and, by a few words, nerved each heart to its apparently desperate task.

"Soldiers, I want you to capture yonder height. Follow your brave leader and you will do it," said he.

A shout and a cheer went up, and as it died away the command "forward!" was given, and away went as brave a detachment of soldiers as ever faced an enemy.

Greatly to his delight, Elam W. Baxter was with that portion of his regiment that had been detached to take part in the terrible struggle, and his quaint, good-natured remarks kept everybody in good humor, even amid the rain of deathly hail which soon greeted them.

The brave three hundred were soon marching along the Saltillo road, toward extensive fields of sugar cane, which they entered to screen their movements from the enemy's observation, and falling into single file they proceeded toward the river.

Before reaching the intervening river the roar of cannon from the hill told them that they had been observed, and that the remainder of their march must be through a shower of deadly fire.

But, animated by their intrepid captain, they paused not for a moment, and on reaching the river they dashed in waist-deep, while shot and shell were plunging into the seething waters in every direction, throwing it in wildly-dashed spray all over them.

Through this terrible stream the Americans rushed, and gained the opposite bank without loss, a circumstance that appears to be almost miraculous. It seemed wonderful to us, and from it we caught the feeling that we led charmed lives, and that no Mexican bullet could harm us.

We reached Federation Hill and began the ascent, and what a task it was. The hill is four hundred feet in height and very steep, and its base is covered by a dense growth of chaparral. On reaching the base of the hill, Captain Walker halted his men in order to make the most careful preparation for the ascent.

During the interval large reinforcements of Mexicans poured into the fort, and companies of infantry and sharpshooters descended from it, and stationed themselves on ledges and convenient places for the purpose of picking off our men as they struggled gallantly upwards, but without being able to reply to their shots.

Walker, sword in hand, was leading the way, and striking right and left for victory. But, after a fierce struggle, the enemy began to waver, then slowly retreat up the hill towards the fortress, closely followed by the Americans, who were yelling wildly at the prospect of victory.

As the soldiers neared the fort, the terrified garrison [illegible] them, and without order, but full of confidence and daring, the Americans, led by Walker, closely

followed by Baxter, rushed through the gates, and at once charged upon the nine-pounders, with which it was principally armed.

A dozen of the bravest of the enemy drew their swords, or clubbed their muskets, and made a decided stand against our approach. Walker and Mills, with what few followers had got through the gate, at once charged upon them, and a desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued.

But it was of short duration only, for the Americans swarmed in upon them, and they fled precipitately to another fort, called Fort Soldada.

In less than five minutes after they entered the fort, the Mexican flag was torn down, and the American flag hoisted in triumph in its place.

"Soldiers," said Walker, "we have work before us yet."

A loud cheer answered him.

"That other fortress must be taken!"

Another cheer.

"And that before the enemy has recovered from this little affair. Follow me! Forward, march!"

With loud cheers they obeyed the order, and at once the whole force started along the sides of the hill, and with terrible impetuosity drove all opposition before them, and those of the enemy who were stationed outside to meet the shock quickly fled under cover.

Onward flew Walker, closely followed by his eager troops, and attacking the fort simultaneously on several sides, quickly overcame all opposition, and rushed pell-mell into the inclosure before the enemy had time to evacuate it. The colors of the Fifth Infantry were quickly flying in the place of the Mexican flag, and they were soon followed by those of the Seventh.

There was but little opposition offered by the Mexicans, for they seemed to have become thoroughly demoralized at the terrific onslaught of that little handful of Americans, and so they surrendered at once.

The captured garrison numbered fifteen hundred, together with one nine-pounder, a large number of mules, camp equipage, and ammunition.

So far the victory had been complete, although only one point of many that were even stronger had been gained.

Captain Walker at once secured all that he had captured, and then turned the guns that he had taken upon the Bishop's Palace, after which he wrote a dispatch to General Worth, commencing thus:

"One notch has been gained on the ladder of victory. We hold Federation Hill, according to orders," and then he gave a hasty account of the whole affair.

By this time night began to close around, and it was already dark in the vale below when Walker dispatched his messenger.

There was no other alternative left but to remain in the captured works until morning, and to add to the discomfort of the situation, it began to rain hard, and without food or shelter the captors of Federation Hill lay down to rest their weary bones.

But there was no grumbling. They were content with the victory they had won, and even amid the darkness and the storm they sang:

"And the star spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

Baxter was in his glory.

"Where's the chap as bet his arthly existence agin mine that the American eagle wouldn't lay an egg in this ere fort afore night? Show him ter me! I want ter make way with his consarned arthly existence."

A good-natured laugh greeted him.

Walker went among his men and congratulated and consoled them as best he could, and was by them greeted with the wildest cheers and enthusiasm.

During the night a relief company was sent by Worth, and three days' rations were furnished to each man, and about midnight, after having eaten hearty suppers, the soldiers laid down upon the ground, with the rain beating upon them, and sought a few hours' sleep.

But what dreams came to that sleeping band of triumphant braves?

CHAPTER XV.

"ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH."

Severe as had been the fighting on the 21st, there was yet heavier work before the assailants of Federation Hill, and it was generally understood among them that the fighting they had done was but the prelude of what was to come on the morrow.

The heights of Independence Hill was still occupied by the enemy, and the works by which it was surrounded were to all appearances impregnable.

The troops destined to carry these important works were aroused from their sleep at 3 A. M. of the 22d.

Very soon after being formed the Americans commenced their march, moving in column, until they reached the base of the hill, where a short halt was made, and Walker and Hays divided their commands in two parts. Walker led his column up the northwest slope of the hill, while Hays led his up the southwest side.

The ascent was steep and terribly difficult, but the assailants pushed forward bravely until within about one hundred yards of the summit, when a loud discharge announced that they were discovered, and as they pushed onward and upward the noise of battle grew louder and louder, until the whole hill seemed to rock and quake with the terrific peals.

The air seemed to be full of screeching bullets and bursting shells, and yet, wholly undismayed, and with entire confidence in their leaders, they pushed on amid this terrible storm until both divisions reached the fort.

Here followed a short but decisive struggle, which terminated in favor of the Americans, and the Mexicans fled towards the Bishop's Palace, leaving our gallant fellows in complete possession of the hill.

Elam W. Baxter had fought like the hero he was, and just at the moment of victory he received a musket ball in the fleshy portion of the left arm, which occasioned him much pain. In fact, both Walker and Hayes were slightly wounded.

But it would have taken a more severe wound than Baxter had received to bend his courage or stop the flow of his patriotic fervor and fun.

He was one of the first to enter the fort, and while others hoisted the American flag in place of the Mexican, he climbed to the top of a captured gun, hat in hand.

"Boys, three cheers with all the wind you've got left, for the star-spangled band-box, Yankee Doodle, Hail Columbit, Goddess of Liberty, Gineral Taylor, Gineral Worth, Captains Walker and Hays, President of the great and glorious United States, and everybody else you can think of. Hip—hip!"

And then there went up a cheer which made American hearts leap for joy, and Mexican faces grow pale.

"Goldarn my great aunt's cat's kittens, but we can lick the beeswax right out of this yer town."

Another lusty cheer, which Baxter led by swinging his cap and getting red in the face.

"Go and have your wounds dressed," said Walker.

"Waal, cap'n, is there any more fightin' ter du?" asked Baxter, leaping down from the gun.

"Not just yet. We must wait for orders."

"Waal, all right. But you see, this ere puncter jist works my grit up, an' if there's goin' ter be any more slam-banging, I want the gore to flow."

"Go and visit the surgeon," said Walker, turning away.

"I'll du it, cap'n," said he, and away he went.

As quickly as could be, a messenger was sent to General Worth, giving an account of what had been done, and asking for further instructions.

Cheer upon cheer went up from the army on the Saltillo road, when the news of the day's victory reached them, and among the hundreds who envied the victorious companies, and would gladly have been with them, none took it so much to heart as Hank Dalton.

"Gineral, I can't stand it any longer," said he.

"Stand what, lieutenant?" asked Worth, in surprise.

"I can't stand it to have the boys a-gittin' all this Greaser meat an' me none. I want to jine Captain Walker right away."

"Very well, if you are well enough, you shall do so. How are your wounds?"

"Oh, I don't mind 'em; but if I've got to stay here an' let my pards get all this fun an' glory, it'll bust 'em open agin," said the brave fellow.

"Very well. You shall join Walker, and also be the bearer of these dispatches to him."

"Gineral, that tickles me like a weddin'."

"Go in company with this messenger, and go at once, lieutenant."

"Away I go," and away he did go, bearing the dispatches of General Worth.

More enthusiasm could not have been raised among the troops had they been reinforced by a thousand men, than did Hank Dalton's appearance make when he came into the fort on Independence Hill, and after congratulations were over, Lieutenant Roland, of the Artillery, opened with his howitzers upon the Bishop's Palace with terrible effect.

"The ball's opened," said Hank, "an' I want some of the gravy, I du, by thunder."

"All right, Hank, I'll let you have some," said Walker. "Put yourself at the head of the Rangers and march upon the Bishop's Palace."

"That yer suits me all ter smash."

"You will find good support in Captain Winton, who marches in advance. We must draw the enemy out, give him the bayonet, and rush our men in at the gate, either with, or ahead of them on their retreat."

"All right, cap. Just watch me."

"I will."

The stratagem which Walker had resolved upon worked like a charm. A heavy Mexican force poured out of the palace, and forming in front of the large gate, came down in one dense, determined mass upon the American infantry.

But all unmoved, the latter received them with a murderous fire, and then the Texan Rangers poured in their rifle fire, which meant a soldier for every discharge.

The Mexicans broke and fled, and were closely followed by the shouting Americans, who charged them with their bayonets, and entered the gate of the palace in company with them, and in such numbers that utter consternation seized the Mexican commander, and the American flag was floating from the staff on the tower before he was fully aware of the disaster which had overtaken him. So sudden was it, and without losing scarcely a man, the Bishop's Palace was won.

"Cock-a-doodle-do!" cried Baxter, mounting a large pyramid of cannon balls that lay in the court-yard, and the answering shout told the listening general that another point in the great siege of Monterey had been won.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CORDON OF FIRE.

The Bishop's Palace was captured, and another stronghold gained from the enemy.

The next morning operations were resumed both by General Taylor and General Worth.

Captain Walker, whom Worth had pronounced the bravest of the brave, was given a large share of the work to do, and placing himself at the head of his faithful Rangers, reinforced by three regiments of volunteers, and some of the work which he led them into was the most brilliant of the war.

How well I remember that terrible day.

The street fighting soon became simply appalling, and the veterans, and those who had shared other severe battles, stood for a moment utterly dazed by the roar of cannon, the reign of deadly bullets, and the slaughter which marked every square yard of pavement.

But the Americans never flinched or dreamed of anything but victory. Both columns advanced and soon became closely engaged with the enemy, and steadily pushed forward into the heart of the city.

The rumble of the artillery over the stony streets, as it galloped here and there as emergency required, to pour its answering charges of grape and ball, volley after volley of musketry, the shouts of officers, the groans of the wounded, all made up a picture that is seldom seen on earth.

Captain Walker was doing his part of the work quite as well as his followers and superiors could wish. Doors were forced open, walls were battered down, entrances made

through the longitudinal walls, the enemy driven from room to room, from house to house, and the sharp crack of exploding pistols and rifles, followed by the shrieks of women, was heard on every hand.

Cheer after cheer arose in proud defiance as Dalton or Baxter from time to time gained a housetop, and one of the most confusing and terrible pictures was presented that ever the war god gloated over.

The column of Colonel Childs sustained a most deadly fire in the Plaza de Carne, and while forcing their way from point to point, and amid the storm of destruction, the daring Captain Gatling, of the Seventh Infantry (whose name has since been made famous by the invention and adoption of the Gatling gun), was severely wounded in the arm while gallantly leading on his company.

Both sides of the plaza were now occupied by our troops, while Walker and his men were working their way through the buildings, and drawing, every hour, closer to the strongholds of the enemy.

In a short time the enemy was routed, and we were in possession of the west side of the city, and to within one square of the cathedral plaza, where the Mexican forces were concentrated.

Night came on and yet the fighting did not entirely cease. Cannon and muskets darted forth their tongues of flame and sent their terrible messengers abroad, and a wild, lurid glare lit up the whole city.

But our men had gained sufficient advantages to rest secure. Thousands of them camped in plazas, and others, especially those under Walker, occupied the housetops, and while some ate and slept, others were preparing for the morrow's fight.

Midnight drew on apace, and for a moment all was hushed in darkness. Peace seemed to hover over the scene of ruin and strife, and waving her branch of olive, to command the contending parties to cease the wild war of bloodshed and devastation.

Both sides were girding themselves for the terrible struggle which was to ensue on the morrow.

And what a morrow that was!

But I will not weary the reader with the details of that terrible siege, but will close the chapter with the simple announcement of victory for our arms, for after three days' fighting, the Americans had driven more than double their number from all their out-positions, and surrounded them in such a manner that they must either surrender or evacuate the city.

General Ampudia recognized the situation, and wrote a letter to General Taylor trying to make easy terms, but the bluff old warrior refused to see it, and demanded an unconditional surrender which should give us a victory worthy of our fighting.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIGHTING TO THE VICTORIOUS END.

The ceremony of evacuation commenced on the 25th; General Worth was intrusted with the superintendence of it.

General Worth was placed in command of the city, with his division encamped within the walls, while the remainder of the army, under Taylor, remained at Walnut Springs.

Elam W. Baxter survived the terrible fight, and was as full of fun, life, patriotism and adventure as ever. In fact, he seemed to have grown a foot in height, and a thousand feet in importance.

He had hurrahed himself hoarse over the evacuation of Monterey, and to his mind there was no bird so large, so high-soaring, so high-flying, as the bald-headed, steel-gaffed, American eagle.

He was quartered in the city, in Worth's division, and on account of the bravery and daring he had shown all through the contest, he was allowed greater privileges than many others, and he was continually taking advantage of them for his own amusement.

After all these battles, after all these great victories had been won, the American army rested a while upon its laurels. Monterey was the base of operations, and for several weeks rest and recuperation was the order of the day, although some of the characters with whom the reader has become acquainted, and who can readily be guessed, made the time merry by their antics and adventures.

But at length General Taylor received an order from General Scott, his superior and rival (envious of the fame he had made) demanding a large portion of his army to assist in the proposed capture of Vera Cruz.

It was a cruel change, for Taylor and his men had thus far been doing good work, winning some of the brightest victories that ever emblazoned American arms, and had jealousy not been at the root of it all, Taylor would have finished the war as gloriously as he began it.

Captain Walker and his men, as well as the First Mississippi regiment, to which Elam W. Baxter belonged, were among those left to brave, bluff old General Taylor, who was not more delighted than they were, for although Scott proposed to transfer the theater of war to another part of Mexico (that bordering on the Gulf), for the sake of sharing in or appropriating the honors which had been or were to be won, yet there remained for the plucky little army of Taylor some of the hardest work of the war.

General Santa Anna had been made the supreme dictator of Mexico, and was doing his utmost to restore confidence in the minds of the people, and to get together an army large enough to crush General Taylor at a blow.

This wily general had the entire confidence of the Mexicans, and they not only believed that he would drive out and crush the invader, but they manifested their confidence by flocking to his standard in large numbers, so that by the time Scott had drawn off the larger portion of Taylor's army, leaving him less than five thousand effective men, Santa Anna was within a few miles of him with a well appointed army of twenty thousand.

It would seem (in fact, it did seem to those who remained with Taylor), that Scott would not have been sorry if Santa Anna had been enabled to swoop down upon the old hero, and capture him.

But General Taylor was not made of the right sort of stuff to be captured, any more than his brave little army was, and when the terrible battle of Buena Vista loomed up

in the distance, not a cheek paled, not a heart faltered, even though the greatest hero of Mexico was before them with her finest army.

But to go over the battle of Buena Vista and give the particulars would only be to chronicle what has been written of the battles. Taylor met the haughty foe with his little army in the rocky defiles and gorges of Buena Vista, and when this demand was made upon him, with the armies face to face, he showed himself a hero in his reply, and every soldier under him shouted his approval.

It was a dreadful battle, but the Americans came out of it victorious, and Santa Anna, the hero of Mexico, was obliged to fly from the positions he had chosen before a handful of heroic men, who had never experienced defeat or dreamed of anything but victory.

The sun sank in the west as the last point of the glorious field was won, and as night crept on among the rocky gorges, the tired American soldiers sank on their arms upon the field.

Although the air was excessively cold, the soldiers slept without fires, not knowing but that the Mexicans might return in the morning to renew the contest. The hours were those of horror.

The surgeons were at work with all their might, but the wounded were so many that some were neglected in spite of all endeavors.

The siege of Monterey was one of the most remarkable of which history gives any account, but history fails to record a braver battle in the face of such odds, or a brighter victory than this of Buena Vista.

Captain Walker was breveted major, and Hank Dalton captain, as was Elam W. Baxter, who had fought like a winged demon all through that terrible day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RINGING DOWN THE CURTAIN.

Our heroes, after participating in the conquest of California, under the gallant Kearney, joined General Scott, and under his command took part in the glorious march to the capital of Mexico, during which time was fought the battles of Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Conteras, Cherubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, San Cosme, Belen Gates, and finally, with the victorious Americans entered into the city of Mexico, the former abode of the Montezumas, and one of the most beautiful and at the same time one of the strongest places in the world.

The American army was everywhere triumphant, Mexico was conquered. In less than two years our army had penetrated into the interior of that ancient land, strong in numbers and natural position, and with only a handful of men, compared with Mexicans, had conquered everything with which they had come in contact.

Captain Walker—or Major of the United States Army, as he should now be called— was returning with the remnants of his Texan Rangers, whom he had led with so much honor and glory through so many battles and adventures.

He was very sad, for at Galveston, Texas, he was to part with them, and as yet they had not reached Matamoras, near the scene of their first exploits together; and besides this, there was a certain Mexican beauty, Bianca Gabella, whom he had met and loved in the earlier stages of the war.

What would be his fate in this direction?

The march was taken by easy stages, and in many cases discipline was relaxed so that there was all sorts of fun and amusement going on while they were making their way back over the ground they had once conquered.

On their arrival at Matamoras, the army received a regular ovation from the inhabitants, who now seemed to regard them as friends, rather than enemies; but on no person did the attention of the people fall with more enthusiasm and respect than upon Captain Walker, the Bravest of the Brave.

The whole army remained at Matamoras for some time, arrangements having been made to take the soldiers on board government transports there for New Orleans, and points along the coast further north.

And the leading citizens at once assembled and gave Captain Walker and his men a reception at one of the large halls there—a reception and ovation worthy of themselves and the soldiers in whose honor it was given.

But the event of the evening was brought about when Senor Gabella approached Captain Walker, leading his beautiful daughter, and as they flew to each other's arms, he said:

"You love each other and although she is a scion of one of the noblest houses of Spain, who should claim the most beautiful sooner than the bravest of the brave?"

The cheers that rang out, from American as well as Mexican throats, showed how well the speech and the suggestion was received, and while the lovers still stood in each other's embrace, looking fondly into each other's eyes, the cheers still rang, and the music of the band blended everything into harmony.

"Waal, Hank, what du 'yu think now?" asked Baxter, while the hurrah was at its height.

"Maybe as how yer war right, Bax," said Hank.

The next day Captain Walker took leave of his Rangers, having obtained a month's leave of absence from General Butler—the successor of General Scott, for the purpose of marrying the beautiful girl whom he loved so well.

And so the curtain fell slowly upon this, one of the grandest military dramas of modern times. In a month's time the army was removed from Mexican soil, and according to agreement Captain Walker met his old comrades at Galveston, where a perfect whirlwind of enthusiasm was awakened, as was afterwards the case in other portions of the United States, on beholding and having a chance to honor The Bravest of the Brave.

Next week's issue will contain "HARPOON HARRY: OR, THE CASTAWAYS OF THE ANTARCTIC."

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A MASKED MYSTERY

AN UP-TO-DATE SERIAL STORY

By J. T. BROUGHAM

(CHAPTER XIV—*Continued*)

"Yer must be mighty sure o' winnin'; but I'll risk it."

"Oh, I've got a streak of good luck to-night. Deal!"

The cards were cut, shuffled, cut and dealt, and the stakes were put up in greenbacks.

It all depended on one deal.

Intense silence followed.

Both men were intent on the cards they held.

Then Hawkins discarded and filled with two cards.

The bank burglar took one card, and was about to lay down his hand, when Hawkins said:

"The game is mine, Leary."

"Wot hev yer got?" asked the thief.

"A straight flush."

Leary laughed and laid down his hand.

Hawkins turned as pale as death and started, uttering a wild exclamation of intense dismay.

One glance at Red Leary's cards was enough.

It was a royal flush.

Hawkins had lost.

CHAPTER XV.

MAUD'S SECRET.

It happened just as Red Leary predicted in that game of cards, for, reduced as he was to his last dollar, the fortune of the thief had turned in his favor.

Hawkins' jaw dropped, and his black eyes bulged out.

He was fairly stupefied at his misfortune.

Red Leary burst out laughing, and scooped in the money.

It was then only that Jim came to his senses.

"I am ruined!" he muttered. "See the point?"

"It's yer own blamed fault for temptin' ther devil."

"You are right. I should have left well enough alone."

"Too bad. I'm sorry fer yer."

"It has taken me nearly two hours, with steady playing and running long chances—two hours of sweating excitement—two hours of nervous expectation—two hours of anxiety, fear, and torture of mind to win that money. And now, in less than two minutes I have lost every cent of it."

"That's ther fortune o' chance games," said Red Leary, indifferently, as he pocketed the money and put on his hat as if to go out. "I'm done. I've got me money back. It's more'n I expected, I'll gi' yer a straight tip on that."

"Hold on! Lend me that money to skip with, will you?"

"No. I'm in too much need of it meself."

"Don't be a clam, Leary! I need it bad—see the point?"

"So do I."

"I tell you the case is desperate."

"Well, I'm not a-goin' ter let yer hev it."

"Then help me to get some elsewhere."

"How in thunder can I do that?"

"Very easily. I will explain to you."

"Well—go on. I'll do my best fer yer."

"My cousin, a young girl, is in my power."

"Blackmail!"

"I don't care a rap what you call it."

"Well, drive ahead, me buck."

"A few whispered words from me in her ear will cause her to fork over a check for a thousand dollars."

"Whew!" whistled Red Leary, "yer must have her cold."

"So I have—see the point?"

"An' when she gives yer ther check?"

"As the banks are closed, I want you to cash it."

"Oh, yer do, hey?"

"If you don't need cash until to-morrow, will you do it?"

"How'll I know the check isn't worthless?"

"You can trust me, can't you?"

"I will, ter keep yer out o' this hole."

"You needn't fear. She is worth a mint."

"Is she ther gal wot cut yer out o' yer uncle's money?"

"Yes. She is the only relative I've got in the world."

"Oh, I guess she's good fer ther stamps then."

"Are you satisfied?"

"Yes. I'll do it."

"I will repay the favor some time—see the point?"

"Wot's ther grip yer've got on her?"

"Oh, a nice little secret, which I can't divulge yet. You see, it's worth a heap of money to me, and I must keep it, so that I can bleed her in future again."

"Orright. Now, how's ther snap ter be worked?"

"I'll send you to her house for her. The note I will write will fetch her with a blank check. You can take a cab. Pretend that you are a detective, and that you caught me in some scrape, and want money to let me go. That will do—see the point?"

"Go on—write yer note—I'll kerry it."

"She lives in Greenwich avenue. No——"

The thief nodded, filled a short black pipe with tobacco, lit it, and settled back in his chair, while Jim Hawkins drew a memorandum book from his breast pocket, and hastily indited a concise note to Maud.

When it was finished, he carefully read it over and then handed it to the bank burglar, saying:

"Here it is, Leary. It is bound to fetch her."

The thief pocketed the note, and arose to his feet.

"I'll be back in less'n an hour, Jim," said he.

Then he left the room, and descended the stairs.

Hawkins lit a cigar, and went into the gambling room adjoining the apartment he had been occupying.

The detective noticed a closet in the so-called office, and as soon as Hawkins was out of sight, he slipped out of the little hall room, and entered the other apartment.

Gliding into the closet, which was empty, he drew the door shut and awaited developments.

"The wretch has got Maud Postboy in his power for some reason," the detective cogitated, "and means to blackmail her. I will remain to see the end of this adventure, and lend the girl my protection, should it become necssary. Then I can nab Hawkins. He is a mighty bad man—much worse than I thought he was. What secret power does he wield over the girl, I wonder? I hope she will betray it—anyway I will soon learn how this affair will terminate."

Before the hour was gone, Jim Hawkins returned to the room, and nervously paced up and down the floor.

"Could Red Leary have fooled me?" he muttered loud enough for Tom to hear. "Perhaps he has not gone on the errand, and don't want to cash the check for me. It is time he was back."

He had hardly given utterance to these suspicions, when he heard the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs, the door opened and the voice of Red Leary said, wheedlingly:

"Right this way, leetle lady, right here into this room. I'm sorry, miss, but law's law, an' I had ter nab him."

Jim Hawkins sank into a chair, assuming a very dejected look, covered his face with his hand, and leaned his elbow on the card table.

An instant later the red-headed bank burglar entered the room, leading Maud by the arm.

"There he is, miss," said he, in silly-simulated tones of profound pity. "Jist looker his mug. It's that sad a feller could a'most weep ter look at him."

He pushed her forward, rapidly closed the door, and locked it, taking the key out and putting it in his pocket.

The girl was clad in black from head to foot.

Her face was very pale, and there was a reproachful look upon it as she drew closer to Hawkins and said:

"This is a fine piece of business, Jim!"

"Ah, Maud, you came, eh?" said Hawkins, looking up.

"Yes. Your appealing letter touched my heart. You said you are under arrest for stealing, and that the detective will release you for a bribe."

"Exactly so," admitted Hawkins, with a nod.

"You said this would be your last offense—that you want to save your name from a prison record, and swear that if I aid you will leave New York."

"Quite true, Maud, see the point?"

"Well, it is suspected that you are the murderer of our uncle, but I do not and never did believe it. In proof of this, I will do what I can to aid you to become a better man as you say you will in this letter."

"Maud, you are my good angel."

"I would like to be."

"Then prove it by paying this man."

"How much money does he want?"

"Just one thousand dollars."

The girl started, her face flushed and she said:

"Such a large sum? Your offense must be enormous."

"He will take no less—see the point?"

"But this is rank robbery."

"Can't help it," said Jim, shrugging his shoulders.

"But I refuse to pay such a sum."

"What? Refuse? Don't dare to, Maud!"

"Why, you speak in threatening tones."

"Well, I mean business! See the point?"

Maud started and a suspicious look crept into her eyes.

"I distrust you!" she exclaimed. "I will leave you!"

"Hold on! Don't be a clam! Pony up! I've got the upper hand."

"Worse and worse. You are becoming wicked!"

Hawkins arose with a sinister smile on his evil face.

"You refuse?" said he. "Then I'll force you."

"What? Would you dare to injure——"

"Oh, it is only verbal violence I offer you."

"What do you signify?"

"Write out a check, or I shall let the world know——"

But to the chagrin of Tom and the thief, both of whom were intently and eagerly listening, he whispered the rest.

The girl tottered back, uttering a groan of horror.

"Heavens! You know that?" she gasped wildly.

"Yes. Now will you sign a check or shall I make my knowledge public to the world?"

"In heaven's name say nothing," wailed the frightened girl. "I will give you the money."

CHAPTER XVI.

A SHREWD TRICK.

A look of intense satisfaction swept over Jim Hawkins' dark face, for he saw that he had the girl completely in his power, and could blackmail her all he pleased.

"Did you bring a check with you?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the girl in constrained tones.

"Then fill it out for one thousand dollars, payable to bearer, and hand it to this gentleman."

"Wait," said the girl decisively. "I want proof that he is a detective, as he said he was."

"Can't give any," said Hawkins with a laugh.

"Then he is not an officer?"

"No; I will admit the truth—it can't do any harm now that you know how you are in my power—see the point? I want the money for myself. He will cash the check for me at once."

"Oh," said Maud, nodding her head, "you are simply levying blackmail, I see. Well, I cannot help myself, I presume. But since I have learned that you are simply coercing me, I will tell you that I will yet get the best of both of you."

"Is that a threat?"

"Certainly it is. A woman's wit is equal to any emergency, and you will soon discover that I am no exception to the rule. Give me pen and ink."

"Here they are," said Hawkins, taking the requisites down from the mantel-piece, and setting them on the table in front of the girl. "But you can rest assured of one thing, Maud, and that is this: we are both very desperate men—see the point? We will brook no nonsense from you either. In fact, you will not leave this house until you swear by your most sacred oath that you will not trick or betray us to the police. Indeed, it would be as much as your life is worth to do so, and, besides that, if you play us false, I would expose your fearful secret—see the point?"

"As for your threats," said the girl, snapping her fingers, "I don't care that much for them. You would neither kill, injure nor expose me. I'll tell you why: You are such an avaricious, mean spirited and grasping wretch that you would only rob yourself by so doing, for it is very evident to me that you mean to blackmail me every chance you get. If I was hurt or dead you could gain nothing—absolutely nothing, for my money instead now of reverting to you would go to other quarters. So, you see, I realize how the case stands exactly, and have not the least fear of you."

"As far as I am concerned," said Hawkins, coolly, "you are right; but you seem to forget this man. He is a person who would hesitate at nothing. Do you know who he is? No? Well, I'll tell you. He is Red Leary."

"What! The bank burglar mentioned in the newspapers ——"

"The same," interrupted Hawkins with a chuckle. "How does that strike you. Isn't he a lamb-like fellow to get down on you for an injury? Look out, Maud, look out!"

The girl shuddered and glanced uneasily at the notorious thief.

She was not very favorably impressed with his looks.

But Maud Postboy was not a fool.

A shrewd plan to outwit these sharpers had entered her mind in the beginning of this game, and it was with her hidden idea in view that she so boldly told Jim that she would get the best of him and his accomplice.

"I will write out the check!" she exclaimed.

Hawkins nodded and sat down.

Maud opened her reticule, and withdrew a blank check against the Fiftieth National Bank of Wall street.

Then she filled it in as Hawkins directed and signed it.

The two villains exchanged significant glances of approval, and smiled very blandly.

Maud handed the check to Hawkins.

"You have my best thanks!" said the rascal.

"It is the first and last check I will sign for you!"

"Do not be too sure—I may come down on you like a load of bricks for thirty thousand soon!"

"Gimme ther check," said Red Leary. "Here's ther cash. I must be goin' along now, an' you kin sen' ther gal home yerself, Jim."

Hawkins exchanged the check for the thief's money and Red Leary said "good-night," bowed awkwardly to the girl, unlocked the door and passed out.

They heard him go down the stairs, and then Maud turned to Hawkins and uttered a prolonged laugh.

"Baffled!" she exclaimed exultantly.

"Eh? What do you mean?" demanded Hawkins in tones of alarm. "What caper have you been up to?"

"I have fooled you both, as I said I would."

"How so?"

"With that check."

"The check?"

"It is worthless."

"Worthless?"

"I have no account with the bank it is drawn against."

"Holy suffering Jingo!"

"To-morrow I will notify the bank how I was blackmailed, and stop payment everywhere on it, to save myself from trouble for making a useless check."

"Great Scott!"

"Isn't a woman's wit great, eh, Jim?"

The hidden detective could hardly restrain a laugh of glee over the sharp game the girl had played on the rogues.

"What a fool I was not to foresee this!" groaned Hawkins.

"Oh, I knew I could get the best of you," laughed Maud.

"Won't Red Leary be mad when he learns the truth."

"Very mad, I presume. But I anticipated some such vile roguery as this, and was thoughtful enough to premeditate balking you at your underhanded work."

A dark scowl crossed Jim's face.

He banged the table with his fist.

"You are mighty cunning, ain't you?" he sneered.

"Too shrewd for you."

"Now suppose Red Leary goes for me, and makes me redeem that check, how am I going to pay it?"

Maud shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"How do I know?" she replied.

"Well, that is just what will happen."

"I thought you was going to reform?"

"That was only a bluff to get your check."

"Then there is no good left in you?"

"Not a particle that I know of."

"I thought better of you than this, Jim."

"Oh, don't gush—don't give me any sentimental business."

Maud sighed, for she saw that he was beyond reformation.

"Will you let me go now?" she asked.

"No. You must first swear not to betray me."

"I swear it, in order to make you keep my secret."

"And you must give me a good check."

"What!"

"You must have brought a check against a bank in which you have got money deposited, as you did not know what to expect, and I want you to fill it out for five thousand dollars."

The girl started, and murmured a remonstrance.

"No! No! You cannot force me to——"

"But I shall! Here, let me see if you haven't got a good check stowed away in that reticule."

And he made a snatch, and tore it from her hand.

Maud uttered a cry of alarm, and started toward him; but he pushed her back with one hand, opened the bag, and fumbling inside of it, he withdrew another check.

"Rascal!" panted Maud, "you shall not——"

"Ah!" he chuckled, interrupting her. "Here it is—see the point? Now fill it in for five thousand ducats."

The girl sat down again in despair.

"I won't!" she said, angrily.

"Then I shall compel you to!" he hissed.

He drew his revolver from his pocket, cocked it, and aiming it at her head, he exclaimed:

"Sign that check, or I'll blow your brains out."

"Heaven help me! You must be mad."

"Write, I tell you!" he thundered furiously.

Maud picked up the pen tremblingly, for she feared that the desperate man might make good his threat.

She was just about to write, when Tom pushed open the closet door, and jumped into the room with his pistol clutched in his hand.

"Hold on there, Jim Hawkins!" he exclaimed as he aimed his weapon at the young man's head in a very dangerous way. "Lower your pistol! She shall not write a word on that paper if Tom Wonder has anything to say about it, and I think he has."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE POLICE.

Jim Hawkins was very much amazed to find himself confronted by the detective, and uttering a cry of affright, he recoiled from the side of the equally amazed girl.

Maud arose, and glancing at Tom, she cried:

"After all, my trick has proven to be a success!"

"Hawkins!" said Tom sternly, "hold up your hands!"

"The deuce!" muttered the chagrined rascal.

"Do you hear me?"

"I'll alarm the gang in the next room, and they'll kill you!"

"Will you? Well, I think I can prevent that."

"Do your infernalest! I defy you, Tom Wonder!"

"If you budge an inch I'll shoot you!"

"Oh, I don't need to run to bring them in."

"And neither need I to down the whole gang—see!"

As the detective said this he reached up to the electric annunciator on the window frame, and setting it on the police call, he started it.

"Stop!" exclaimed the startled Hawkins.

"Oh, no!" said Tom with a laugh. "I've called police to this house now. They will raid the place and scoop in all the gamblers, and aid me to hold you!"

"Well," said Hawkins, "it will take time for them to get here, and before they do I'll have you nailed!"

He lowered his pistol, and without raising it to aim at the detective, he pulled the trigger.

A shriek pealed from Maud as the report rang out, and the jingle of glass told that the bullet had missed the detective, and had gone through the window.

The reverberation of the shot had hardly ceased when Tom heard the rush of footsteps in the hall.

"The gamblers are alarmed!" he muttered. "Desperate men haunt the den, and all of them hate me like poison. Once they get their clutches on me I'll have a tussle!"

"Oh, Mr. Wonder!" cried Maud, running over to Tom. "Save me from this wretch! Great Heaven—what peril is this we are in. Oh! He will murder us!"

"Be calm! I will protect you!" exclaimed Tom.

He clasped an arm around the girl's waist, and aiming at Hawkins he fired a shot at him.

"Oh!" screamed the rascal, and he dropped his pistol.

"Into that closet with you, Miss Postboy!" muttered Tom.

And he pushed the girl in and shut the door.

Hawkins got Tom's shot in his arm, and was leaning against the wall clutching the injured member with his disengaged hand, glaring at the wound like a wild beast, his face contorted, and his body writhing.

The footsteps in the hall neared the door.

Then it was flung open.

Into the room rushed a score of men.

All hard-looking characters, too, and but a single glance was enough to show them the situation of affairs.

"Tom Wonder!" cried one.

"A detective!" exclaimed another.

"He has shot Jim Hawkins," added the third.

Tom glanced keenly at them and recognized many old offenders among the gang of whom he had made enemies in times gone by.

He aimed his pistol at the men menacingly.

"Get out of here!" he exclaimed.

The men scrambled back into the hall, and a sullen growl of anger broke from their lips.

They thought Tom was going to shoot at them.

"Come back here!" roared Hawkins, seeing that they were deserting him. "He is alone, and has rung up the police to jail you. Why don't you take some sort of satisfaction out of his hide?"

"Don't you advance a step," said Tom.

He frowned, and they hesitated.

Hawkins suddenly made a rush for the door.

He saw that he was trapped, and that only the most prompt action could save him from arrest.

Tom fired.

The bullet clipped by Hawkins' head and missed him.

The next instant he was out in the hall amid his cronies, the door was slammed shut, and Tom was left alone in the room.

He ran to the door and tried to get out, but found that Hawkins had taken the key and locked it on the outside to keep him in.

It made the detective frantic to find himself made a prisoner in this manner.

He hurried over to the closet and opened it.

"Miss Maud! come out!" he exclaimed.

"Have the villains gone?" breathlessly asked the girl.

"Yes; and they have locked us in here."

"Oh, my! what shall we do?"

"I'll burst the door open—see?"

He held his revolver at the lock, and pulled the trigger. The bolt was broken and he opened the door.

Just as the detective and the girl hurried out in the hall a fearful commotion was heard down-stairs, and Tom knew then that the police had arrived in answer to his summons and had encountered the gamblers in the act of escaping.

The expressions uttered by the frightened gamblrs soon apprised the police of what the trouble was, and they charged on the rascals, when a struggle ensued.

The fight was at its height when Tom left the girl in the hall and ran down-stairs.

"Go for them! They are gamblers!" cried the detective, as he ran into the midst of the throng in the dark hall. "Do not spare them, boys!"

He ignited his dark-lantern, flashed its rays on the struggling, shouting crowd, and gave the three policemen an opportunity of distinguishing friends and foes.

Most of the gamblers tried to get away without fighting.

At the moment Tom joined in the fray the three officers were each struggling with a man apiece, and the detective attacking another, the scene of confusion increased.

It did not last long, however, for all but those who had been captured having made their escape, the officers rendered their prisoners docile with their nippers.

Tom scanned all of the men.

Hawkins was not among them.

The detective was disgusted, and giving the man he captured into the hands of one of the policemen, he ran up-stairs to get Maud.

She was gone.

A thrill of dismay passed through the officer.

"What has become of her!" he muttered.

Filled with anxiety, he hurried into each of the rooms, ran down-stairs, searched the floor below, and, in fact, searched the building through.

It was useless.

Maud had vanished.

The policemen went away with their prisoners.

"Maud must have come down-stairs during the excitement," the detective muttered, "and has gone out in the street."

To see, he hurried out.

Down Sixth avenue he saw her familiar form.

She was walking slowly along, occasionally looking back, and Tom accelerated his pace to catch up to her.

There was a cab going along close to the gutter, ahead of the detective, and he did not notice that Jim Hawkins sat inside of it.

Maud had not seem Tom yet.

The cab reached the girl ahead of Tom, came to a pause, the door opened, Hawkins sprang out, rushed up to her, pressed a small sponge saturated with chloroform to her nostrils, lifted her up in his arms and got into the vehicle with her again.

Tom was amazed, and came to a sudden pause.

The whole thing was done in a twinkling.

By the time the detective recovered his wits the cab had started off at a rapid pace.

Tom ran up Sixth avenue after it.

"An abduction!" he muttered. "But what for?"

He had recognized Hawkins at a glance.

Only one impression prevailed in the detective's mind, and that was the fact that Hawkins wanted to get the girl in his power, so that he could force her to sign a check for him.

(This story to be continued in our next issue.)

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